IS GOD STILL SPEAKING TO MEN ?

P. W. PHILPOTT

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IS GOD STILL SPEAKING TO MEN?

Is God Still Speaking to Men?

AND OTHER ADDRESSES

By

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To

JESSIE STUART PHILPOTT,

my precious wife, who, for forty years, has been to me a constant source of inspiration and encouragement, and whose prayers have contributed so largely to the blessing with which these sermons have been fraught.

FOREWORD

THESE sermons are some that have been given to my people in the regular course of my ministry. Most of these messages were Sunday evening sermons, preached with the thought of bringing men to a decision for Christ. They are now sent forth in this form in the hope that some who read may be helped.

P. W. P.

Los Angeles, Calif.

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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I

IS GOD STILL SPEAKING TO MEN?

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."
—HEBREWS 12:25.

IN the study of a subject of this kind, there are two things that impress any honest student of the Bible. First, in the Word of God there is never any attempt made by any one, at any time, to argue for the existence of God. That fact is everywhere assumed. For instance, the first statement of the Bible is, " In the beginning God." Through all the ages the truth of His existence is implied. Second, there is never any doubt in the Bible as to the possibility or likelihood of a divine revelation. That is also presupposed. The text is an illustration: " See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." The Epistle to the Hebrews has its basis in these facts. It opens with the words: " God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

HE SPEAKS THROUGH THE WORD

It suggests, furthermore, that the whole Word of God is the vehicle of His voice. The Old Testa-

ment is the Word of God just as surely as is the New, but it is fragmentary and incomplete. The New Testament complements the Old and makes the Bible a full, final and supreme revelation of God's will.

A number of years ago I heard Dr. A. J. Gordon tell of travelling for several days with a Greek gentleman. He discovered that this man knew nothing of the Scriptures. Dr. Gordon asked him if he would care to read a Greek New Testament. His offer was accepted and he presented him with his own copy. After several days, the Greek came to Dr. Gordon and said, "I have read this wonderful Book. But there must be another volume, is there not?" This would undoubtedly be the conclusion of any honest person who, never having heard of the Bible before, had been persuaded to read the New Testament. Some one has said that "the New is in the Old contained, and the Old is in the New explained." New Testament truth is in the Old Testament in symbol, and Old Testament shadows and types are brought to light and interpreted in the New Testament.

God speaks, then, through His Word. Every part of it is essential to every other part. An example of the power that reposes in the whole Word of God is seen in the changed attitude of modern Jews who have been led to study the New Testament. A worker among Israel told me, "Whenever I am able to persuade an orthodox Jew to

read the New Testament, invariably he becomes a Christian."

A Jewish brother attended a series of Friday evening Bible talks in my church, relating to Jewish history. As we came to the conclusion of that study, I knew that this man was under conviction. A few days later he met me on the street and said, "We were greatly troubled at our house last night."

"What was the matter?" I asked him.

"In the middle of the night," he explained, "my wife said to me, 'Father, I am afraid that our people have crucified the Messiah!'"

They had seen the Old Testament in the light of the New, and their eyes had been opened to the fact that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Tears started down this brother's face as he talked with me, and I knew that a soul was coming into the light of the glorious Gospel.

GOD SPEAKS TODAY

The text is in the present tense. It implies that God is speaking now. The writer of the epistle probably never heard any earthly utterance from the lips of Jesus. Once he heard the Lord speak from heaven, as he was travelling the Damascus road. The Hebrew people to whom the letter is addressed never heard Jesus speak in the flesh. Yet the Apostle Paul believed and taught that the pleading, persuasive voice of Christ is ever making

an appeal to human hearts. Christ Himself taught this. On one occasion He said to His disciples, "What I say unto you, I say unto all." These words apply not only to the men and women who surrounded Him as He spoke, but to every generation that shall follow. They apply to us who are living in the present day.

Not only does God speak directly through His Word, but He speaks through indirect agencies. Church history furnishes striking examples. Augustine, who through his writings probably has influenced the Church more than any other man since the days of the apostles, was in his youth a wild profligate. He went to Rome and later to Milan. There he came under great conviction. Seated one day in a garden, in great agony of mind, he heard a voice speaking distinctly, "Take the book and read." He believed it to be the voice of God and immediately found a copy of the New Testament and began to study it. The very first passage of Scripture that he read revealed Jesus to him and he accepted Him as his personal Saviour. Later, it was discovered that the voice that Augustine heard was that of a young girl having an argument with a friend. Suddenly she lifted her voice and challenged, "Well, take the book and read." To Augustine it was the voice of God, and it brought him to Christ.

Martin Luther, a pious monk, climbed the long stairs as an act of penance. His mind was

troubled. He was seeking light. Half way up the stairs he heard a voice, "The just shall live by faith." It was the voice of memory speaking the words of God. Luther jumped to his feet and entered into the light of full salvation.

HOW TO KNOW GOD'S VOICE

Since it is presupposed that God is speaking, and that He is speaking now, it is natural to seek the marks by which we may recognize His voice.

First of all, *the divine voice is always reasonable.* God never calls a man or woman to do an unseemly thing. Frequently His demands may be humiliating to the flesh, but never unbecoming. I once listened to a great address by Gypsy Smith on the subject of "Stripe Washing." The evangelist pointed out that it was after the jailor had thrown Paul, beaten with forty stripes save one, into the inner prison, that he himself had been led to Christ. Then, with true humility he ministered to Paul's needs and washed his bleeding stripes. That sermon led a great many people to do some very practical things. Their "stripe washing" included confessions to those whom they had slandered, and restitution to those whom they had wronged. They found that God's voice demanded a humiliating but reasonable thing, and they had courage enough to obey it.

There are other voices, however, that appeal. When Satan finds a man aroused by the Spirit of

God he sometimes speaks to him, suggesting that he do some extreme or foolish thing. Beware of the voice that says, " Cast thyself down."

Shortly after I consecrated my life to God I was in a railway train and there came an impression that I should tell the people about me of the great things that God had done for me. A theatrical company had boarded the train. It was the wildest group I had ever seen. For a few minutes I had a hard struggle, but I finally got up and began to preach to them. I made no impression upon them, but I argued secretly that I had been true to my covenant. By a very simple experience God was to show me the danger of following impressions which might be Satan's commands and not God's. A few days later I was walking across a very muddy street. A voice seemed to say to me, " Kneel right down here now and pray, if you are a consecrated man." I realized at once that to do what I thought the voice suggested would be ridiculous, and I replied in the words of my Master, " Get thee behind me, Satan." Thus I learned that God gives to us the " spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The Lord Jesus Christ, when on earth, asked many things that were difficult, but never one that was unreasonable. He Who has endowed us with intellect and He Who says, " Come, now, and let us reason together," will deal with us as reasonable beings.

In the second place, *God's voice is always kind.* He no longer speaks in tones of thunder and with tongues of fire as He did in the days of the law. God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Every tone trembles with tenderness. Instead of the stern command, "Stand aside!" the voice entreats, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad."

In spite of the gentleness of His voice, Peter denied Him. Paul persecuted Him. The prodigal ignored Him and wasted his substance in riotous living. But when each of them turned to Jesus he received no word of reproach, no reproof, no evidence of bitterness of spirit. There was always the assurance of forgiveness and the expression of love and mercy. Similar treatment was accorded the woman taken in sin. The scribes and Pharisees brought her to Jesus and said, "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" Jesus

stooped down and wrote in the sand. Perhaps He did this to cover the blush that came on His face for those men. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, speaking on this subject, said, "I wonder what Jesus wrote on the sand. I can see all those Pharisees bending over to see what He was writing. And I imagine that presently His finger traced the name of some woman, and perhaps some place, and when some old fellow saw that significant writing, he got up and started for home!" He does not need to be told what is in man; He knows!

When Jesus stood up, every man had gone, but the poor woman was lying there still. Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Think of His tenderness, His compassion, His love! This is not the day of vengeance. This is the age in which He is binding up broken hearts. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." The voice of God is always kind. The Gospel that we preach is the glad tidings of salvation.

Finally, *God's voice is the voice of power.* He speaks, and it is done. A Roman centurion, whose story is told in the eighth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, came to Jesus in the interest of his servant who was sick. Approaching the Master, he said,

"Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." Jesus turned to him and said, "I will come and heal him."

But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." In other words, he said to the Lord practically this: "Just as servants and soldiers obey me, so demons and death are subject to Thee. Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

"Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou has believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

HE WILL SPEAK WITH THE VOICE OF POWER AT HIS SECOND COMING

"Marvel not, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." In that day His voice shall rend the earth, and those bound by death shall come forth. God has spoken once for all in His Son, the Saviour of men. That message is inclusive and final. He has said all that man needs to know, and all that ever will be said as regards the way of salvation. But we have seen that in another sense God is still speaking to men,

in His Son, ascended and interceding at the right hand of the Father. He will speak in judgment tones, in His Son and through His Son, in the Day of the Lord. Heed the voice that is always reasonable, always kind, always powerful. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

II

THE MAN WHO WON AND LOST

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other."—GENESIS 13:10.

ABRAHAM and Lot represent two classes of believers—not simply two classes of men in general, but two classes of Christians. They were both men of God. Abraham, the father of the faithful, had learned to trust God and to obey Him. He represents that class of Christians to whom "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." On the other hand, Lot represents a totally different class of believers. Job puts himself in this company when he says: "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." Paul speaks of this group when he says: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." In other words, although these believers are saved by grace, their works have not

glorified God, and they have nothing to show for their service.

TWO TYPES OF BELIEVERS

Let us review, briefly, the history of Abraham, who represents that class of believers who seek to give God the highest place in their lives. They learn through experience. God chose Abraham to be the founder of that great nation, Israel. When the Lord called him, He commanded him to forsake his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and to go into a land that He would show to him. Abraham did not wholly obey the Lord. Had he obeyed in every detail, he would have saved himself a great many heartaches and a good deal of disappointment.

He disobeyed in that he took his father with him; also a nephew, Lot, and probably some other relatives. Furthermore, he did not go into the land that God showed him, but went only part way, to a place called Haran. There he remained until God brought sorrow and death to his household in order to move him into the land of promise. Thus early in his walk with God, Abraham began to learn important lessons in the school of experience—a method of training that continued throughout his life.

The lessons that God taught Abraham were not unique or unusual. Abraham's seed was placed in the same school. When the children of Israel

walked in the ways of Jehovah and did that which God commanded, they prospered; they enjoyed the blessings of health; and they were always triumphant over their enemies. Defeat came as a result of disobedience. Sickness followed sin. When Israel came out of Egypt, God expressed His desire for the nation to Moses: "Oh, that there was such a heart in them that they would fear my name and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever." God does not take delight in the affliction of His children. He does not rejoice in their suffering and sorrow, but in "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" which He knows will result from His chastening.

Christians who, like Abraham, endeavour to follow God, to obey Him, and to do His will, will often make mistakes; but they will learn through experience what they cannot learn in any other way. Experience is sometimes a severe teacher. But it has taught many Christians that God's way for them is not only holy, but happy; it is the best way, and also the brightest. When we accept God's plan, walk according to His will, and allow His purpose to be fulfilled in our lives, our joy is increased and the heavenly prospect grows brighter.

After all, is the way of the believer a hard path to travel? No, it is "the way of the transgressor" that is hard. God's "ways are ways of pleasant-

ness," and all His "paths are peace." Abraham could testify to this truth.

Lot represents that class of believers who have an unholy affection for the things of this world. This showed itself when there was strife between Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's herdsmen. It became so serious that Abraham called his nephew and said: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me." Abraham had learned that it is better to have separation than to have strife. It was true then, and is yet, that nothing hurts the cause of God among men so much as enmity and dissension between brethren.

The trouble that came between Abraham and Lot was a quarrel over riches. It was not the last controversy of this kind. Solomon warned of this danger when he said: "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall." Undoubtedly, greed for gold is at the bottom of the evil of our present civilization. "The love of money is the root of all evil."

Moreover, *in a crisis, Lot ignored the Lord.* There are a great many choosing hours in every life. Some of our decisions we would gladly revoke if we could. In a sense, every choice has a bearing upon eternity.

The Bible contains the record of some wise de-

cisions as well as some very sad and foolish ones. Moses made a wise choice when he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." In his case, as in every other, it took a great deal of grace to say, No. Moses might have become a great ruler in Egypt, having the control of vast wealth. But his gain would have been only transitory. In order to win eternal riches, he refused this alluring prospect. As a result of his decision, he was sent to "the backside of the desert" where, for forty years, he did nothing more spectacular than to shepherd sheep. At length, however, God Almighty brought him forth, and in the last forty years of his life He used His servant as one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known. Eternal issues were involved in Moses' wise choice. In the Book of Revelation we are told that the great chorus, sung by the redeemed, will be "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." No one would have heard of Moses had he not made his great decision to live for God.

Another wise and noble choice was made by Joshua when he said: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That decision meant much, not only to Joshua, but also to his family. What a splendid position for a man to take, especially a father!

Again, Ruth, the Moabitess, chose wisely when

she took Naomi as her leader and Naomi's God as her God. As a result, Ruth became an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to these Bible characters, history furnishes the record of honoured leaders and examples who would never have been known beyond a small circle, except for the fact that they deliberately chose to follow Jesus Christ. That choice has given them " favour with God and man."

LOT'S CHOICE

The Bible also speaks of some tragic decisions. As for Lot, he seemed to be invariably led in wrong directions because he was moved by wrong motives.

First of all, *Lot made a selfish choice.* He claimed all the plain of the Jordan because it was well watered everywhere. There are several reasons why he should have deferred to Abraham. In the first place, Lot was the younger of the two. Furthermore, everything that Lot had, had come to him as a result of his association with this man of God. If Lot had been fair and generous, he would have gone to his uncle and said, " Uncle Abraham, it is your right to make the choice. I will take what is left." But it was not in his heart to do this; therefore Abraham magnanimously yielded his rights and invited Lot to take whatever he wished. Before the young man stretched all the fertile plain of Jordan. Behind

him rose the barren hills of Judah. As he looked at the plains, he thought of their common problem of finding pasture for their sheep, and selfishly he replied, "I choose the plain!"

In the second place, Lot made a worldly choice. That is, it had in it no thought of God. If he had only stopped to think and to pray! But there is no suggestion that he so much as lifted his eyes to God. Like a great many other believers in such important moments, he was influenced by what his eyes saw and what his heart craved. His experience illustrates what Solomon had in mind when he said: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." If you, who belong to "the household of faith," dare to make a decision and leave God out of it, you may be sure that you will bring upon yourself sorrow and loss, as Lot did. He soon found himself and his household compromised and endangered in the wicked city of Sodom.

If Lot had looked at Sodom from God's viewpoint, he would have seen the terrible sin of the city. He would have realized how unholy was the atmosphere into which he was bringing his daughters; he would have thought of those wicked, licentious men whom his daughters might marry.

But he saw only the fruitful plain. "He lifted up his eyes and saw the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord." That is, it looked like the Garden of Eden, the place of beauty, and purity, and innocence. But in reality it was "like Egypt." And Egypt always stands for sin, and lust, and judgment. Yet this man of God deliberately took his family into that unholy atmosphere! It may be that you, too, are entering into a society or into a circle of influence that will affect your household as Lot's choice affected his family. Perhaps it would pay you to stay in the old house, near the old church, with the old fellowship. The new location may look good to you. It may have better homes, better schools, better opportunities. But is it "like Egypt"?

In the third place, Lot made a foolish choice. If he had considered, he would have known that by following this course he could not ultimately win. The true believer must look at his life in the light of eternity. He must estimate values as God estimates them. He must ask: How will my choice and action affect my standing "before the judgment seat of Christ" where everyone shall "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

As a result of Lot's foolish choice he lost fel-

lowship with Abraham. His eyes were turned toward the supposed advantage of residence in Sodom, while Abraham continued to look to the Lord alone for help, for guidance, and for reward. Lot did not immediately locate in the city, but his eyes and his heart were in that direction, and it was not long before he actually dwelt there. Perhaps his wife said to him one day, "Now, husband, we have not found these people so bad, have we?" Having lost their spiritual vision, the immediate prospect was fascinating. In their case, as often occurs with us, Satan came in the subtle disguise of "an angel of light." To change the figure, he always gives his best wine first, and afterward that which is worse.

Perhaps Lot's wife continued by saying, "Husband, I am thinking about our girls. They need society. Do you not think we might take a house in the city?"

It may be that Lot replied, "Well, I don't know about that. I have found these people pretty square." He was becoming more and more liberal, a trait to be expected of one whose heart was in the world. Finally Lot and his household gave up the old tent, and it may be that they moved into a brown stone house on Fifth Avenue in Sodom. The people of the city were so delighted over their coming that they elected Lot to the office of Supreme Court Judge, and in that position he sat in a conspicuous place at the gate

of Sodom. Perhaps his wife said to him then, "Now, didn't I tell you? It pays to be broad-minded. If you were narrow, like Abraham, what would you have except sheep, and oxen, and folds? Now you are a judge, and one of the most honoured men in the whole city."

WHAT LOT LOST

All this time the storm clouds were gathering. A time of great retribution was coming. To Lot, Sodom had appeared to be a safe place, if not very good, but to God it was exceedingly sinful and ripe for judgment. The Lord was patient and waited a long time, but the judgment finally fell. When it did, Lot lost his possessions; but worse than that, *he lost his influence as a man of God.* He had forfeited spiritual power for political prestige. In the day of judgment he had no influence with his fellow citizens. When the messengers of the Lord came to warn Lot of the approaching doom of Sodom, "the men of the city, even the men of Sodom compassed the house round, both old and young, and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly." He reminded them that he was their judge, and he urged them not to disgrace their honourable city.

But in rage and derision they replied, "This

one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge."

God had intended that Lot, like every other believer, should be a channel of blessing to others. Satan offered him money, friends, and political advantage, and he accepted them; but in so doing he ceased to be an influence for righteousness and a helper of his fellow men.

Not only so, but *he lost his influence in his own house.* He had gone into Sodom for the benefit of his family. But he had compromised with God, and he lost his power with God and with men. When "Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city . . . he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." What a sad situation in the life of any believer when his own kindred have lost confidence in him and when they laugh at his testimony.

Many a modern parent has been in the same unfortunate predicament. I recall a mother whose daughter was dying, who asked my wife to pray with the girl. "I am going to ask you to talk to her alone," she said.

"No," Mrs. Philpott replied, "you come into the room with me."

The mother refused. "Yesterday," she explained, "I was so concerned about my daughter that it seemed I must say a word to her about her

salvation. Finally I got up enough courage to ask her about her soul. But she replied, 'Mother, I don't want to hear anything from you about it. You have not lived the life.'"

A similar case was that of a young man who was asked by a fellow workman to attend a revival meeting. He refused to go. Then the friend said to him, "I want you to know that I am praying for you."

"You had better pray for yourself," he retorted. "I attended the meetings two years ago where you confessed Christ. I was ready to yield, but I said to myself, 'I'll wait. This man works with me at the same bench. If I see that salvation makes a change in his life and that it satisfies him, I'll make my decision for Jesus Christ.' I have watched you for two years. I have found that you are just as worldly as I am. You go to the same places I go. I was with you last night, and I have been with you almost every other night of the week. I didn't see you on Wednesday evening. I suppose you were at your church prayer-meeting then, praying for me. You had better pray for yourself."

Tragedy upon tragedy followed faithless Lot. He lost not only his possessions and his influence, but he was compelled to see the sudden and terrible death of his wife, and to bear the almost more terrible sorrow that came to him through

the knowledge that his own daughters had been corrupted in the filthy city of Sodom. He was able to pull his wife out of the city by force, but he could not keep her from looking back. The pillar of salt became to him an everlasting reminder of the fact that he had made the wrong choice.

He had won the fruitful plain of the Jordan; but his loss was far greater than his gain. He himself was saved "so as by fire." If, like Abraham, he had stayed in the place of separation from sin, God would have blessed and prospered him. It is far better to choose the barren plains and reap Abraham's reward, than to choose Lot's riches and suffer his loss.

III

LOT'S WIFE

"Remember Lot's wife."—LUKE 17:32.

THE words of the text are a warning. Jesus Christ Himself admonishes us to consider Lot's wife. We are told in the New Testament that the experiences of the Old Testament characters "happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." That is, they are recorded for our instruction, so that we need not fail as our predecessors failed.

LOT'S WIFE TRAVELLED THE BROAD ROAD

From Adam's day to ours, every human being has walked in one of two distinct paths. In their beginnings these two roads seem to be parallel, but as we trace them to their destinations we find that they widely diverge. Solomon speaks of them both when he says: "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and "the way of transgressors is hard." The Lord Jesus Christ refers to them both. "Enter ye in at the strait gate," He says, "for wide is the gate, and broad

is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." The broad road is the way of least resistance, and it is humanly natural to take it. It is the "way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death."

One reason why so many chose the broad road instead of the way of life is because of Satan's powers of deception. It is he who lures the traveller away from the strait gate and points to the seeming advantages of the broad way. He always promises something desirable—but he is not able to make good his word. For instance, when he came to Eve in the Garden of Eden he offered her something pleasing to the eye and pleasant to the taste. She accepted, but she received, instead, sorrow and death. Some sins are attractive, while others are loathsome. Satan always paints an attractive scene in his efforts to win the young. He never tempts the innocent girl to be a harlot, or the boy to be a drunkard or a vagabond. He comes to them first with something that appeals to the flesh. Satan is the greatest actor the world has ever known. He has a million make-ups. He can transform himself into "an angel of light" and "a preacher of righteousness." He tempted the Lord Jesus Christ, and if he would do that, we must not be surprised if he tempts us also.

With subtlety he approached our Lord from three different angles, but Christ rebuked him with the words: "Get thee behind me, Satan." From Christ Himself we receive the warning: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Satan beckons to the broad road. Christ leads the way to the path of victory.

There are lessons to be learned from every Bible character, travelling as they did, one or the other of these two roads. Some point the way to heaven and to God. Others, through their failures, show how to escape Satan's snares. We often hear it quoted that—

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime;
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time."

The lives of a multitude of others show us also how easy it is to lose our way. Lot's wife is one of the latter class.

SHE FAILED AS A HELPMEET

Observe, first of all, who she was. She was *Lot's* wife, and Lot was a man who was endeavouring to serve God. Although a poor example, he was nevertheless a believer, so Peter tells us. If he had had a better wife he might have been a better man. It would appear that we men need

not only God's help—the grace, comfort, guidance and light that come from His Holy Word—but we need also the help of a loving, loyal wife. Men in the business world meet temptations that we preachers know nothing about. What a blessed thing it must be to steal away at night into the harbour of home and there find fellowship and love! When God made Adam He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." If ever a man needs one to encourage him, it is when he takes a stand against "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and undertakes to walk with God. Lot lacked this encouragement. I have always felt that his wife was responsible for the move into Sodom. In the hour of crisis, she failed Lot and she failed the Lord by turning to the pleasures of the world instead of the worship of Jehovah.

I am thinking of a man whom I had the privilege of leading to Christ a number of years ago, whose wife was a helpmeet indeed. He was a terrible sinner and had been in jail again and again. The family lived in a poor, old, tumbled-down shack, scantily equipped. One night, after his conversion, I went to see him. I saw not only a happy family, but signs of returning prosperity. While the husband went into a near-by field to milk a fine Jersey cow that he had acquired since he became a Christian, his wife and I talked together. "I would like to tell you about the great

change that has come to our family since Mort brought Jesus Christ home with him the other night," she said. "When he came in, about five o'clock in the evening, the children ran to tell me that daddy was coming, and it looked as if he was sober. This greatly surprised us. He ate his supper and left the house. We thought he was going out to spend the night, and we went to bed early. I left the lamp burning on the table. About nine o'clock I heard him come in, and I knew by the way he walked that he was sober. I could hardly believe it. Finally I got up and came to the bedroom door, and, preacher, what do you suppose I saw? I saw my husband here at this table, beside this lamp, reading the Bible! I was afraid to move for fear I might awake and find it all a dream. Presently he pushed back his chair and knelt down like a little child to pray. When I saw my big husband drop on his knees and bury his face in his hands—I could not help it—I just ran to him and threw my arms around his neck and said, 'O Husband, if you are going to pray, so am I!'"

She was a real helpmeet. Had her husband been married to a "Lot's wife," it would have been very unfortunate for him.

THE SIN OF LOT'S WIFE

What sin did Lot's wife commit? In the first place, *she was guilty of the sin of worldliness.*

She had lived in the shadow of Abraham's altar and had been surrounded by divine influences. But the glamour of the world had a strong appeal for her. She was a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Did she not know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God"?

In the second place, *she committed the sin of presumption.* She did not intend to be lost, but she presumed upon the mercy of God and procrastinated until it was too late. Although He had been longsuffering with her, there was a final opportunity. "He will not always chide; neither will be keep his anger for ever." When Noah was building the ark, the wickedness of man was so great on the earth that it sent a stench to the very gate of heaven, yet God's Spirit continued to strive with men. But one day He ceased to strive. "I have stretched out my hand," said Jehovah, "and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, and I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." In the same way, Lot's wife was offered a last chance, but she refused it.

In the third place, *she committed the sin of unbelief.* Probably Abraham, in urging Lot and his family to leave Sodom, sent them a message something like this: "Flee for your lives; Jehovah has revealed to me that He will utterly destroy Sodom." Lot's wife would not accept the warning. She had a hundred reasons for disbelieving. Perhaps she said, "Nothing of the kind has ever happened. This city is so great and so beautiful that it cannot be ruined. Besides, there is not a sign of a storm. The sky never was brighter. There is no indication that a catastrophe is imminent." There was just one reason, over against all her arguments, why she should leave the doomed city. It is expressed in two words, "God said." The same two words should answer every question with which the Christian may be faced. It is not a matter of what I may think, or of what Doctor So-and-so may say, or of what Professor Blank may believe; but what saith the Lord? I plead with you, as Abraham pleaded with Lot, to take God at His word. "How shall we escape, if we neglect"—*just neglect*—"so great salvation?"

Finally, *Lot's wife committed the sin of ingratitude.* If there is one evil that is more heinous than another it is the sin of ingratitude. Lot's wife had received blessings direct from heaven, mercies that the other inhabitants of Sodom knew nothing about. They were hers

only through the grace of God. Yet, ungratefully, she refused allegiance to the God who gave them. What a base ingrate is that man or woman who, like Lot's wife, has been brought up in the shadow of the family altar, has enjoyed privileges and blessings as the direct result of some father's or some mother's faith in God, yet who, in spite of all this, "loves the garish day," chooses the pleasures of the world, and turns away from the Son of God.

The sin of ingratitude leads to terrible ends. Lot's wife lost respect for her husband; she would not listen to what he had to say. She could not even believe the angels when they warned her to flee for her life. Then judgment fell suddenly. It was a fulfilment of God's own word: "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." It was similar to the experience of Judah, before the captivity, when "they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." Jehovah's patience may be exhausted. When His gracious invitations are ignored and His divine methods for preventing impending ruin are refused, judgment is sure to follow. There is no second chance in another world for any man or any nation that refuses the mercy of God. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of

salvation." "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment."

An illustration of the tragedy of postponing acceptance of God's offer of grace has its setting in a little Canadian hamlet where God gave me a very gracious meeting. The whole community was stirred, but there was one man who would not yield. I talked with him several times. He was under deep conviction, and I thought, as did the other Christians, that he would surely come to God on the last night of the services, if not before. But he did not come. The next day I went to a little town a few miles away. A messenger came to me there with the tragic news that this man, who had persisted in refusing Christ, was dead. "He was killed in the woods," my informant told me. "They were cutting down a tree, and it fell on him. Just before it crushed him he said to us: 'I was greatly impressed with what the preacher had to say a few nights ago. He said the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved, and he added that all the grain that is not gathered in at harvest time, perishes under the winter's snow. There has been a great harvest in this community, but I have not been gathered in.' Just then the tree fell, and he passed instantly into eternity."

He may, in his last breath, have called upon God, and "whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But his life and his tes-

timony, like those of Lot's wife, are a solemn warning. I tremble when I look into the faces of men and women who are moved by the Spirit of God, when I see them turn away. God Himself—and I say it reverently—cannot save you against your will. Did He not try to rescue Lot's wife? Heaven's angels entered into the ministry of snatching her from death, and yet, by her own choice, she was lost.

" Remember Lot's wife."

IV

THE FOE ON THE INSIDE

"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them."—JOSHUA 7:11.

THE conquest of Canaan, in which Joshua met and defeated thirty-one rulers of petty kingdoms, and went in to possess the land that the Lord God had promised Israel, is a type of that spiritual warfare in which the Christian must engage if he would possess every blessing in Christ. There may be spiritual victories as spectacular as the conquest of Jericho; there may also be defeats as ignominious as the capture of Ai.

Every Christian wishes to be victorious. It is natural, then, to ask two questions: What is the secret of triumph? And, How may defeat be avoided?

An answer to the first question lies in the history of the conquest of Jericho. This city, the first to be taken, was surrounded by immense walls and defended by an army of giants. The sight of it, forty years before, had filled Israel with terror. Their spies had reported that the walls reached to heaven, and that the inhabitants

were so great that the men of Israel were as grasshoppers when compared with them. Only Joshua and Caleb had faith to take God at His word. Because of fear and unbelief, the Israelites were returned to the wilderness for forty weary years. Later, when Joshua marched upon the city to take it, his success was phenomenal. The reason for this lay in the fact that he walked in humble obedience to his God and followed the divine programme given him by the angel of the Lord. Thus, miraculously, the walls fell and the city was taken without the loss of a man. This rule for victory held on twenty-nine other occasions when Joshua's army was outstandingly successful. In fact, in all that series of battles, Joshua suffered only one defeat. In the record of Israel's loss at Ai there is an answer to the second question, How may defeat be avoided in the Christian life?

Notice, first, that Ai was near to Jericho, the place of victory. It lay over against Bethel, where Abraham had built an altar nearly five hundred years before. Also, the city was regarded by the spies as "only a little one." They said, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither: *for they are but few.*" So three thousand soldiers were selected as being a sufficient number to capture the city. Filled with self-confidence,

they ascended the hill on which Ai was built. But when they had gone only half way, to their very great surprise, the gates of the city swung open and their enemies swept down upon them. The onslaught struck terror to those three thousand men. Thirty-six of them were slain, and the rest, a disorganized horde, fled for their lives.

This shameful defeat brought panic to Israel and deepest sadness and chagrin to their leader. Like many a Christian, Joshua could not see the reason for such a failure. In his prayer he even accused God of making some mistake. He said, "Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land, shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" But this experience humbled Joshua before the Lord. He "rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord." In this attitude Joshua very soon learned, as every humble believer may learn, the causes of defeat.

THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH

He learned, first of all, that *the best of believ-*

ers may fail. Joshua was one of the best. He had a record of forty years of faithfulness. He had been one of two who, forty years before, had defied the unbelieving spies and had said, "Our God is able to give us the land." All through his life he stood for things worth while.

At Jericho he had met the angel of the Lord, had accepted His plan for the taking of the city, and had followed it to the letter. At Ai he consulted no one. He was like many Christians who say, "We will pray about this great problem and make sure of God's plan." But they fail to pray about the little things, and then they wonder why they fail. There is no Jericho too big for victory if you are walking with God; and there is no Ai too small for defeat if you are not walking in fellowship with Him.

Some people feel very self-sufficient. For instance, in a meeting a few years ago the old hymn was sung:

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above."

At the close of the service a brother came to me and said, "I object to the singing of that hymn."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it is not true."

"In what respect is it untrue?" I asked him.

He said, "I am not 'prone to wander, prone to leave the God I love.'"

"Then," I replied, "you have an experience wholly different from mine."

A few years later, that brother fell into very grievous sin. He lost his testimony and his ministry. The last time I saw him he was a broken man. He had not realized that the natural heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." He had not heeded the advice: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Joshua was unlike this man in that he recognized his weakness and learned from his failure. Mistakes may become blessings to all who have not reached that unfortunate place where they are so satisfied with their experience that they call defeats victories. Joshua's failure was a blessing in disguise.

Wherein did he fail? He failed by not consulting God before he made the attack upon the city. He went before he was sent.

THE STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY

Joshua learned, in the second place, *the strength of our threefold enemy*. There is the holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who would lead the believer to high and holy things; there is also a trinity of evil,

the world, the flesh, and the devil, whose power would drag him to perdition. Perhaps the strongest of these latter three is the flesh. This is but another way of designating the self life. Satan may make a daily attack; the world may frequently appeal; but self is ever present. Joshua yielded to it when he went in his own strength to capture Ai. Jesus Christ Himself commanded His disciples to deny self daily. There is an old hymn that reads:

"Ah, this cruel self, how it strives,
And works within my breast,
To come between Thee and my soul,
And keep me back from rest;
How many subtle forms it takes,
Of seeming verity,
As though it were not safe to trust,
And venture all on Thee."

Whether the appeal comes from the world, self, or Satan, it will lead ultimately to sin. A great deal of trouble is caused by calling sin by some other name. The Bible speaks plainly: "The thought of foolishness is sin;" "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" "All unrighteousness is sin." Joshua, humbled in the dust after the defeat at Ai, learned anew the strength of the subtle foe of man and the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Third, Joshua learned that *no man lives to him-*

self. We read that believers in Christ are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." This thought brings a sense of security and of responsibility. If one member suffers, all the other members suffer with it. This was true in Joshua's case. Achan sinned, and all Israel suffered with him. The record reads: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing." Achan did not realize how far-reaching the consequences of his wrongdoing would be. The Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold appealed to him. He seemed to say: "Here is a chance. No one will see me. Even if I am caught, I will take the punishment." He did not think he would involve the whole nation in his crime. He did not know he would break Joshua's heart. He could not foresee that thirty-six men would be slain because of his transgression. He thought he lived to himself.

Achan's was a secret sin. None of his friends knew of it. They came into his tent and walked over the place where his treasure was buried, not knowing that it was there. No one knew, except the One with Whom we all have to do. Achan was guilty of covetousness, one of the vilest of sins. Through his punishment, at the very beginning of the conquest of the promised land, God seems to say to His people: "I would teach you the awfulness of the sin of covetousness so that in all the years to come you will studiously avoid

it." The lesson was repeated soon after the early Church was formed, when Ananias and Sapphira coveted honour that was not theirs, and were punished with sudden death. Like Achan, they succeeded in keeping the matter dark. But Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" If you are a secret sinner, and are at the same time pretending to be out-and-out for God, you are lying to the Holy Ghost!

We may pray that the Lord will pour out His spirit upon the Church; and yet the Church will be defeated and her banners will trail in the dust, so long as there are enemies on the inside. We cannot escape the truth that, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are inseparably bound. What I am affects you. We need to pray the prayer of the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

THE WAY TO VICTORY

Finally, Joshua learned *the way to victory.* The Lord said unto Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it

even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people." Before there could be any marching or fighting, the sin question had to be met and settled. Tribe by tribe, Israel was brought before Joshua. "And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken; and he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken."

"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

Achan's reply may be summed up in four brief sentences: "I saw; I coveted; I took; I hid." "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." But Achan was not the only one who saw. God saw, also. He watches the individual life of each of His children. The story

of Achan points the way to victory in the present day. It also reminds us that one day "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." At that day every hidden thing will be brought to light, and every secret thing will be revealed.

This is also the way to victory in the present day. Every known sin must be confessed and put away. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

V

SAINTS IN CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD

"All the saints salute thee, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."—PHILIPPIANS 4:22.

IF we had been living in the day that Paul wrote his Epistle to the Philippians, about the last place on earth that we would look for saints would have been in Cæsar's household. Yet they were there, and by the grace of God they witnessed a good confession. From that citadel of Satan these saints sent greetings back to Philippi. If we have ears to hear, they will surely speak to us also across the gulf of the centuries and tell us that God is greater than our trial, and that no matter where our lot may be cast, He will save and keep all who trust Him.

The word "saint" has been invested with a superstitious and idolatrous meaning that is unscriptural and from which it must be divested if we are to get the full force of this message. There is a church that canonizes some of its faithful after they have passed on. Prayers are offered to them and worship given to them which is idolatrous. A saint is simply a saved sinner. It would have been just as proper to have said

the " believers," or the " disciples," or the " Christians in Cæsar's household greet you." The word " saint " or " sanctified one " in Scripture denotes primarily position rather than character. It simply means " set apart." In the Old Testament many things were sanctified—the tabernacle, the priests, the furniture of the tabernacle, etc.—that is, they were set apart from a common unto a holy use. In the same way, believers are sanctified, that is, set apart. " By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

The word " sanctified " has a threefold meaning in Scripture. First, it relates to the past, to Calvary—we *were* sanctified or set apart for God through the finished work of Christ. Second, it relates to the present—we are *being* sanctified, or set apart from sin in a progressive sense, by the work of the Holy Spirit. Third, it relates to the future—we shall know *entire* sanctification when, at the close of our earthly pilgrimage, we look into the face of our blessed Lord and are " changed into the same image." " When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Not until then will we be completely sanctified.

The Scriptures clearly teach that worship belongs to God alone. You remember John's experience in this connection, recorded in that wonderful series of events in the Book of the Revelation. Having seen many things that awed and

thrilled him, he came at last to "the marriage supper of the Lamb," where the saints were assembled. So magnificent was the sight that John fell at the feet of the one who showed him these things. But the heavenly guide said quickly, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God." This, and other similar passages, make clear that prayer offered to saints, or in their name, is unscriptural. Worship given to any one except God is idolatrous. Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father *in my name,* he will give it you." There is merit in no other name.

A GLORIOUS MESSAGE

What message comes to us from the saints in Cæsar's household? First of all, they tell us that *Christ can save at any time, in any place.* These believers were the officers of the law who were commissioned to guard Paul, a prisoner. From his lips they had heard the Gospel; in his life they had seen its power, and it had led them to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour. This speaks to us of the fact that no matter what may be our situation, wherever we find a sinner we may preach Christ to him, and right there he may be saved. Thus the workshop may be as holy as the church. Wherever we witness for Christ He will manifest His presence and His power to save.

Hundreds of illustrations might be given. I mention only two. On a railway train I once talked with a boy who was in great sorrow. As we rode together, he came to Jesus Christ and was gloriously converted. He left me at a little side station to perform a sad errand. He went home to bury his mother, but he went with the joy of the Lord in his heart.

One morning at two o'clock I was called to the bedside of a poor, dying girl in a house of shame. I was never more conscious of the presence of the Lord than I was in that place. Five of her companions stood about the bed as I tried to lead this little girl—she was only in her teens—into the light of the Gospel. They were all outcasts. As I read, at the dying girl's request, the story of the Ninety and Nine and told them of the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, He Himself was there. A heart was going out after Him, a spirit was feeling for God, and He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." It may be that he is often outside of the organization that we call the Church, knocking and trying to get in. But whether it be at a deathbed, or on a street corner, or in a humble mission, or anywhere else, He is always close beside the sinner who is seeking Him. Any time, anywhere, anybody may come, for Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I wonder if there are not a great many people

in factories, in stores, in homes, that would believe unto salvation if only some one would show them the way. One cannot be saved without believing, and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We sometimes sing:

"Jesus would save,
But there's no one to tell them."

The Lord put you right where you are that you might witness there for Him and proclaim the glorious message of salvation. True, you may have gone there in order to make enough money to pay the rent, and to buy bread for the family. But God had something to do with your appointment. He has been waiting a long time for you to make a saint of some sinner close by.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman used to tell of a great Presbyterian Church in New York where, one night, the pastor called the elders together and poured out his soul before them. He told them that he was utterly discouraged and felt that he must resign and go elsewhere. They tried to remind him that he had splendid congregations and that he was getting more money through the offerings than any of his predecessors had been able to get.

"But, oh," he replied, "I am commissioned to make disciples! God called me to bring men to Jesus Christ, and none are being brought. Tell

me when any one has made a decision for Christ during my pastorate. If an elder has any special business under heaven it is to win souls. I want to ask each of you elders a question: Have you led a soul to Jesus?" Every one of them had to say, No. More than that, they had to admit that they had not even tried. That was the tragedy of it.

"Well," said the preacher, "I am going to resign. I think you elders ought also to resign and make room for men who will be real elders and for a pastor whose ministry will be effective."

The resignation was not accepted, but as a result of this conference they all got down on their knees and confessed their sin. The next morning a very influential man in that group went to his office. He rang the bell for his confidential clerk.

"John, how long have you been here?" he asked.

"Five years."

"Do you know I am a Christian?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know I am an elder in the church?"

"Yes, sir; I have been in your church."

"John, are you a Christian?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever wondered that I have not asked you about this before?"

"Yes, sir, I have. When I first came here I

expected that you would talk to me about it, but you didn't."

Getting up, the employer extended his hand and said, "Forget my position now, John. I am just a man, full of faults and weaknesses. Will you forgive me? Will you kneel down here and pray with me, this morning?"

John knelt beside his employer and was converted. Many, like him, would receive Christ if some one would tell them. I have a conviction that the striving after pleasure and the reaching out for foolish things are but attempts to satisfy that heart longing which the salvation of Christ alone can give. Such was my thought once; but—

"Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside;
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Looking at the Crucified."

In St. Louis, a number of years ago, a lawyer was transacting some business with a client. As the latter rose to go, he hesitated at the door, and calling the lawyer by name, he said, "There is a question I have often wanted to ask you, but I have been a coward."

"Why?" replied the lawyer. "I did not know that you were afraid of anything. What is the question?"

"Why are you not a Christian?"

The lawyer replied, "Is there not something in

the Bible to the effect that no drunkard shall have any part in the kingdom of God? You know my weakness."

"That is not my question. My question is, Why are you not a Christian?"

"Well," said the lawyer, "nominally I am an Episcopalian, but I cannot recall that anybody ever asked me if I were a Christian, and I am sure nobody ever told me how to become one."

Then that hard-headed business man drew his chair close to the lawyer and read to him passages from the Gospel of John, and also Acts 13:38, 39. Then he said simply, "Let us get down and pray."

The lawyer prayed first: "O Jesus, Thou knowest what a slave I am to drink. Here this morning Thy servant has shown me the way to God. Oh, break the power of this habit in my life!"

Later I heard this man give his testimony. "Put it down big, put it down plain," he said, "that He broke that power instantly." He did not have to fight and struggle against the habit. God broke it for him. Who was this lawyer? Dr. C. I. Scofield, the editor of the Scofield Reference Bible. Was it worth while for that friendly business man to say a word for Jesus Christ? Scofield was ready for the word. There are others like him, but there is no one to tell them. They need the cheering message of the saints in Cæsar's household. "Wherefore, he is able also

to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

ABUNDANT GRACE

What else do these saints in strange places tell us. In the second place, they prove that *Christ can make and keep Christians victorious.* Frequently we may be called upon to suffer, as Paul did, not only for Christ's sake, but for the sake of our brethren. But in distress there may be joy, in conflict there may be victory. With the shackles on his wrists, Paul wrote to Timothy: "I suffer . . . even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound." The body may be shackled, but the Living Word cannot be bound.

There comes to my mind a Christian brother who suffered probably as much as any human being has ever suffered. His wife and two daughters died within a week, and a little later his son was taken from him. His own body was afflicted. It became necessary to amputate both limbs, his left arm, and two fingers of his right hand. The last ten years of his life were spent in a home for incurables. Oh, how much he endured! Just before he died he wrote a little poem descriptive of his attitude toward this whole bitter experience. The title is "My Master's Orders":

"Go, work and pray;
Such were the orders yesterday,
And should I dare to disobey?

"Then His command
Was wholly changed;
He bade me sit and contemplate
The working of His hand.

"Today His will
Is spoken in these words: Lie still.
And shall I not His will fulfill?

"Lie still and pray:
This is my Lord's command today,
And I will do His will—His way."

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews we are introduced to twenty-one characters, each one representing a separate and a progressive phase of the faith life. Each one passed through a different kind of trial. They were not all delivered out of the furnace of afflictions; but if they were not, they were delivered *in* it. God can keep you from going into the fire if He wills, and He often does; or He can sustain you while you are passing through it. Which is greater—to have no trial, or to have some fierce testing and find that His grace is sufficient for it? Of the heroes of Hebrews eleven, some "quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong. Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about

in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy."

In the same spirit of loyalty to Christ, a Chinese Christian, filled with compassion for his brethren, the coolies, sold himself to five years of slavery in the mines that he might preach the Gospel there. When he died, it was estimated that two hundred souls had been brought to Christ through his instrumentality, and God alone knows how many more there were. Like Paul in Cæsar's household, this noble Chinese became a bond slave that he might tell the story of God's love. There are not many like him. We sing fervently:

"Where He leads me, I will follow,"

but do we mean what we say? Obedience requires that we go unto him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.

SAINTS EVEN IN ROME

A saint in Cæsar's household! Have you ever thought what it meant to be a saint in the days of infamous Nero? One of his biographers has said that "the name of Nero was a shudder." Rome was a cesspool of iniquity and sensuality. Yet there were saints in Cæsar's household. Some people think a change of location is what they need; probably it is more grace that they need, right where they are.

In the year A. D. 64, after the great fire for which Nero was responsible, in order to turn suspicion from himself, he blamed the Christians. Hundreds of thousands of them were brought to trial, and some one has said that the injustice of their conviction was only equalled by the diabolical executions that followed. Some of them were bound up in the skins of animals and thrown to the wild beasts to be devoured. Nero's cruelty reached its climax when he illuminated his garden with human torches, Christians covered with pitch. As the stars appeared in the evening sky a bugle sounded. It was the signal for the touching of the straw at the base of each human torch. In a moment the garden was ablaze. As the fire flared there was a groan, but above it the voices of the martyrs were lifted in praise to God. Their courage and steadfastness make us ashamed of our soft, easy-going lives. We are living in a pleasure-seeking, self-pitying age. Pin-pricks annoy us. We are a long way from the brand of devotion that characterized the saints in Cæsar's household. But of such devotion the world stands sorely in need. May there come to each of us a new interpretation of Christ's command: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," and a new willingness to obey.

VI

THE CHRONIC DOUBTER

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—JOHN 20:24-29.

IN this Scripture a blessed truth is expressed which many of God's people fail to grasp. Perhaps we should say it is a truth that should grasp and hold the people of God. It is the fact that God, as a Father, does not deal with His children en masse, but He deals with them individually and personally, according to the temperament and the need of each. Many examples of this method are found in the New Testament. For instance, John, speaking of Jesus, says: "He knew all men, and needed not

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that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." In other words, Jesus Christ knows everything about every individual. This general statement of the evangelist finds abundant illustration throughout his Gospel.

THE UNDERSTANDING LORD

The first reference in John's Gospel to Jesus' method of dealing individually with His followers, is found in the first chapter. Andrew found his brother, Peter, a blaspheming fisherman, and brought him to Jesus. As soon as the Master saw him He said: "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas: thou shalt be called Cephas which is by interpretation, A stone." The Lord Jesus knew Peter's temperament and foretold his future.

The second reference is in the same chapter. Philip found Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus. Seeing them coming, the Lord said of Nathaniel: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" Nathaniel said unto Him, "Whence knowest thou me?"

Jesus answered and said unto him, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

Nathaniel was amazed. "Rabbi," he said, "thou are the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Jesus answered and said unto him, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree,

believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these."

There is every reason to believe that neither of these persons had met Jesus before this time; yet His knowledge of them was accurate and complete.

A third instance of Christ's personal dealing with men is found in His conversation with Nicodemus. From the account of it, in the third chapter, it is evident that the Lord Jesus knew the deepest longing of this inquirer's heart, and because of that divine knowledge He spoke clearly, positively, and with infinite tenderness.

In the fourth chapter John tells the story of Christ's interview with the woman at the well. We read: "He must needs go through Samaria." The Jews usually avoided this section of the country because of their prejudices against the Samaritans. Jesus "must" go there, because He knew there was one in Samaria who needed Him. When He met the woman at the well He said to her: "Give me to drink." This simple request led to a conversation which first awakened her interest and then aroused in her heart a sense of her own need. Finally He said to her, "Go, call thy husband." This brought from her the humiliating though forced confession of the bitterness and shame of her past life. The reply of the Master proved to her that He knew everything about her past life and her present

circumstances. He did not speak as a critic or as a judge. The tender though thorough heart searching melted the woman's heart and led her to own Jesus as her Lord.

In chapter five is found the story of the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda. "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" Note that Jesus knew how long the man had been in that condition—thirty and eight years. He fully understood the need and had the power to meet it.

In the account of the resurrection of Christ, there are several touches which disclose how completely Jesus understood the temperament of each disciple, and dealt with each of them accordingly. The first witness of the resurrection was Mary, a woman with a broken heart. She dearly loved her Lord, but her deep distress made it difficult for her to believe that the empty tomb was an evidence that He was risen. Jesus did not argue or chide, but He revealed Himself to her in the garden and changed her gloom to light and joy. Next, He found penitent Peter. He dealt with him in private. Just what He said to Peter we do not know, but the Master knew His disciple too well and was too considerate to bring before the world, or even the other disciples, the secrets that had better be told to God alone. We are sure that the backslider was restored to full fel-

lowship with his Lord. Later, Jesus walked with the two disciples—two philosophers, if you like—on the way to Emmaus. He talked with them of the things that were on their hearts. He dealt firmly with their doubts and charged them with folly and dullness of mind because they failed to believe their own prophets. Finally He revealed Himself to them as their risen Lord.

In the story of His dealings with Thomas, the doubter, we have one of the most interesting and instructive illustrations of the Master's method with the individual disciple. Perhaps Thomas has been often misunderstood and much maligned. But there appear to have been some traits in him that made it difficult for him to believe and rejoice in times of darkness. Reading between the lines, we can see that he must have been misunderstood and perhaps criticized by his brethren because he refused to accept their testimony concerning the resurrection. Jesus knew and understood as no one else did. He dealt with Thomas' despondency, his self-pity, and his despair, and brought him out into the full light of faith.

THE DESPONDENT DISCIPLE

Thomas was one of the twelve, and therefore had the privilege of intimate fellowship with Christ. If we analyze the record of his life, it seems possible to trace several weaknesses in his

disposition. First, *he was over-cautious*. He was the type of man who, having become interested in a cause, begins at once to fear for the success of it. That was his nature; he could not help it. Such persons, when they love any one, are always deeply concerned for the welfare of that loved one. The first intimation that Thomas had such a disposition is seen in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John in the account of the sickness and death of Lazarus. Jesus said: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him." Only a few days before, the Jews in Judea had sought to stone Jesus. Thomas remembered this; he could see nothing but death awaiting his Master. His faith did not rise to the assurance that Jesus could overcome every obstacle and thwart all the plans of His enemies. He did not lack love and loyalty when he cried, "Let us also go, that we may die with him," but he did not show faith. His language was not the expression of a wilful doubter, however. There is an unbelief that glories in its objection. Some people look upon it as a kind of credential to great intellectualism. That is what Paul calls "an evil heart of unbelief." Thomas was not in this class.

A second example of Thomas' over-cautiousness is in the fourteenth chapter of John. A little while before the crucifixion, Jesus sought to com-

fort His despondent disciples. Among other things He said to them: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." At this point, poor, despairing Thomas interrupted with the cry of his broken heart: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" With infinite patience and tenderness Jesus drew him away from his questioning to confidence in his Lord, in the words so often quoted: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." There was mild reproof also in the words: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

In the second place, *Thomas was self-centred.* After the crucifixion, the disciples were dispersed. True to the trait in his character that made him live much of the time within himself, he withdrew from the company. This was the worst thing he could have done, for loneliness does not provide a cure for doubts. I have heard of a man who, with several associates, faced a very serious problem. This man, like Thomas, thought his share of the trouble was greater than that of any one else. In his despair he went away into a

secluded place from which he refused to return. A friend, writing to him, said: "You have come to feel that you are the only one who is in trouble. You have forgotten that there are other men and women who are as distressed as you are. They need your counsel and encouragement. For their sakes, as well as your own, I would give you the advice of Emerson: 'Come out in the sunlight and hug the day.'"

The sunshine of God's love will banish doubt and cure self-pity. To emphasize this point, Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman quoted Jude 21 in this way: "Keep yourselves in the sunshine." That is, keep yourselves in the warmth and radiance of God's love and He, in turn, will "keep you from falling," and will "present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Thomas wilfully absented himself from his brethren. While he nursed his grief, the risen Lord appeared to His disciples and filled their hearts with joy. Jesus came "and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. . . . But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." Oh, how much Thomas missed because he was absent when Jesus came!

There is a sense in which the Lord Jesus continues to meet His disciples just as truly as He

met the group in the upper room. Whenever a company of believers are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them, to comfort and to strengthen every waiting heart, just as He cheered the lonely disciples by a vision of Himself. Oh, how much they miss who forsake the assembly!

Because Thomas deprived himself of that glimpse of the Lord, he suffered needlessly from discouragement and near despair for eight days. During that time he lived in the valley of doubt, which, for the believer, is infinitely darker than "the valley of the shadow of death." The doubter has no such confidence as David had when he said: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Unbelief robs him of the assurance of the presence and power of his Lord.

If Thomas had been found in his accustomed place, with the other disciples, he would have been spared that week of extreme discouragement. Moreover, his presence would have been a stimulus to the other disciples. In unity there would have been the greater strength. One doubter in the camp may cloud the vision of the whole company. He owed his full support to the brethren with whom he had been associated for three years. They had all learned great lessons at Jesus' feet. Unitedly they had laboured with Him. Now, in

the crisis that followed the crucifixion, there should have been no break in their comradeship. If Thomas had realized that in the body of believers every member is necessary to every other member, he would have roused himself out of his self-centred brooding and said to himself: "Peter, James, and John are as grieved and perplexed as I am; and Mary, the mother of our Lord, is probably the most bereft of all. I will go to them; I will share their burden." If he had tried to lift another's load he would have lightened his own.

In sharp contrast to Thomas' self-pity and disregard of his companions, there are many touching stories of the sacrifices of men and women who made the need of others their chief concern. The Philippian Christians practiced severe self-denial in order to send supplies to Paul when he was in want. In his beautiful note of acknowledgment of these gifts Paul writes: "I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." In other words, their willingness to meet a brother's need was as fragrant incense to the Lord. The reward would be the abundant supply of their own needs. As the apostle puts it: "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

A more modern illustration of the beauty of

self-sacrifice is found in an incident in the life of Dr. Henry Moorehouse. One Christmas Eve, in a large English city, this preacher of the Gospel was on his way home, very much discouraged. For over a week things had not been going well in the special meetings he had been conducting. He had only a shilling or two in his pocket. If he attempted to buy a Christmas gift for any one of his family, he would not have enough left to pay his carfare home. As he meditated on his poverty, he thought also of a little girl, a cripple, who lived in a basement some distance away. The more he thought of her, the more he felt that he should go to see her. He decided to go, and as he walked in that direction, he saw a doll in a shop window. The price of it was exactly the amount that he had in his pocket. "Poor little Mary will appreciate it," he said to himself, and he went in and purchased it. In a short time he reached her home and rapped at the basement door. A small voice called, "Come in." When the child, helpless on her miserable cot, saw who it was that entered, she said, "Oh, Mr. Moorehouse, I'm so glad you came. No one has been in to see me all day. Mother is working in order to get enough money to buy some coal for Christmas."

The preacher sat down beside her. "I brought you this wee present," he said, and he placed the parcel on the rags that covered her. Mary clasped

the treasure in her arms. Such a wonderful thing it was to a little girl who had never had a doll! Mary began to cry, but her tears were tears of joy. Presently she drew from under the covers a tiny bundle of rags, tied with string to make it look like a doll.

"Oh, Mr. Moorehouse," the child sobbed, "I wanted a doll so much! I have been trying all day to make one. But isn't it wonderful to have something *real?*"

"It is wonderful, Mary," the preacher responded. She could not know that he was thinking of something that had become more real to him, in that moment, than the toy was to the child. Later he admitted, "It cost me a few cents —all that I had—and a long walk home. But in that lonely basement room, all my clouds of gloom and discouragement were swept away, and I had the happiest Christmas I had ever had."

Many of God's children shut themselves up with their misery and doubt. They overlook the fact that God, in some mysterious, wonderful way, makes up for the loss of material things by the consciousness of His presence and the bestowing of spiritual gifts, whenever His people forget themselves and their troubles in thinking of others.

Thomas was self-centred and unhappy until *he was cured of his doubts by a vision of Jesus Christ.* When the disciples told Thomas of their meeting with the Saviour he said: "Except I shall see in

his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Thomas' demand was a legitimate one, but he made it in the wrong spirit. He was agitated. His desire for information was perfectly proper, for he did not demand any proof that the other disciples had already received. His request was readily granted, though with a mild reproof because he had required visible evidence and had not accepted testimony. When fully persuaded, Thomas reached heights of knowledge and boldness of confession that none of the other disciples approached. In his reply to Jesus, "My Lord and my God," he said all that could be said, and at the same time that which must be said by every one who comes to the Lord for salvation.

It would be correct to say, in a spiritual sense, that every Christian must see the "nail prints." For it was by His atoning death that Christ put away sin. One who comes to Calvary and sees its meaning, finds his doubts and fears dispelled. Thomas might have taken that higher attitude, but we must remember that he was on the other side of Pentecost from us. The meaning of Calvary was not fully manifest until the Comforter came.

It is a sad fact that many of the new religions of the day have no "nail prints" in them. Should modern liberalism succeed in eliminating Calvary from the Gospel of Christ, Christianity would very soon cease to be.

There was once a French philosopher who determined to write a better message than the Gospel of the grace of God. So he arranged his material and took it to an old saint to review. After a few days he went to him again. "What do you think of what I have written?" he asked.

"It is fine," the old man replied.

"Then tell me what I must do to have it universally accepted."

"Well," responded the aged Christian, "first of all, you must live it. Then you must teach it. Finally, you must be crucified for it, and rise again. Then every one will believe you."

Full confidence and loyal allegiance are due to Jesus Christ. Whenever they are gladly given, doubts disappear and "the joy of the Lord" abounds.

VII

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."—HEBREWS 12:6-10.

PROBABLY every believer, at some time, has been greatly perplexed over God's dealings with His children. We wonder why depression, misunderstanding, and suffering are necessary when we are honestly trying to do the will of God. This matter perplexed Job, one of the greatest sufferers of all time. "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me," he requested. His petition has been echoed by many another believer. It is not an indication of rebellion if we ask, "My God, why?" Jesus Himself asked that question. In the beginning of the Christian life we ask, "How?" Like Nicodemus, we say, "How can a man be born when he is old?" But as we travel the road of Christian

experience, our query becomes not "How?" but "Why, Lord?"

INCORRECT VIEWS

There is a tendency to regard affliction and pain as retribution for wrong-doing. When we see Christians in trouble we are tempted to wonder why such judgment has come upon them. We are like Job's comforters, as they have been called, although a better designation would be his tormentors. In their self-complacency they regarded the patriarch as a hypocrite. They thought he was suffering because of sin that he had not confessed. They were sincere in their belief, but they were utterly wrong.

Another illustration of the same truth is found in the thirteenth chapter of Luke. The Pharisees reported a great calamity that had befallen certain "Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?" And then He added, significantly, "I tell you, Nay." With that statement He corrected the opinion of the accusers that some awful punishment had come upon the natives of Galilee because of wrong-doing.

Again, in the ninth chapter of John's Gospel we have the story of a man who was born blind and whose eyes were opened by the Lord. The dis-

ciples asked Jesus: "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" They had no solution to the problem apart from the belief that the sufferer, through his own sin, or his forebears through their sin, had brought this affliction upon him. Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." The Lord did not mean them to understand, of course, that the man had never committed any sin, nor that his parents were perfect. He meant, rather, that his suffering was not a punishment for sin—his own or his parents'.

THE MAIN CAUSES OF SUFFERING

Sickness may come from three sources. First, *it may be the result of a violation of the laws of nature.* To use a simple illustration: If I put my hand in the fire it will be burned, and no amount of faith will save me from consequent suffering if I violate that natural law. I may have a wonderfully strong physique, but if I misuse my body, if I abuse it, if I deny it the rest it should have, then I need not wonder if it suffers—perhaps for many days.

Second, *it may be the result of a violation of spiritual laws.* God promised Israel that if they would obey Him, He would allow none of the diseases that came to the Egyptians, to touch them. Later, He told them that if they did not obey Him,

He would smite them " with consumption, and with fever, and with an inflammation," as He did their enemies. I believe a great many people suffer because, like Israel, they have disobeyed God. When they get right spiritually they soon are well physically. I have known this to happen many times. I have been called to pray with unsaved people who were seemingly at the point of death. On their sickbeds they were led to trust Christ as Saviour, and almost immediately their health was restored. Such instances were correctly reported as cases of divine dealing, for God, who has made the body, is surely able to repair it when the heart is right with Him. A saved soul, a clean mind, and a pure conscience contribute largely to the health of the body.

In the third place, *sickness may be the result of a direct attack from Satan.* From the history of Job we learn that Satan is often permitted to afflict the children of God. Job's painful experience is to the Christian no allegory, but an example of a kind of affliction which many who love the Lord are called to bear. Job " was perfect and upright." He " feared God and eschewed evil." The enemy was not slow to press the assault upon him. " Put forth thine hand now," he said to Jehovah, " and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." God accepted Satan's challenge, removed the protecting hedge from about His servant, and allowed the adversary to attack him. It

was Satan who robbed Job of his property and his family, and covered his body with boils.

A similar story is told in the thirteenth chapter of Luke. "Behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." The Lord then answered, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond?"

WELCOMING SUFFERING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

To the question, Why must sincere Christians suffer? there can be but one answer. It is for the glory of God. For this reason God permitted the sickness and death of Lazarus. For the same reason many saints have been on beds of pain and weakness for years—some of the dearest, sweetest Christians that we have ever known. In their suffering they are trusting, and enjoying blessed fellowship with their Lord. They have learned to actually welcome pain. Of their number, Dr. Payson is an outstanding example. For many years he never had a day free from pain. He said: "Every night death comes and stands beside my bed in the form of a terrible convulsion. Every one is more severe than the other, threatening to separate my soul from my body, and always leaving me with the certainty that I shall have to endure it all again tomorrow night. But while my

body is thus tormented, my soul is perfectly happy, more happy than I can explain. My joy in God so abounds as to make my suffering not only bearable, but welcome." This servant of God, in the midst of physical agony, enjoyed a fellowship with the Father of which most of us know nothing.

On one occasion Dr. Payson visited one of his parishioners who was ill. "I have found out," said the minister, "why God puts some of us on our backs. Do you know why?"

"No," replied the sick man, "I do not know."

"It is that we might look straight up into His face!"

God often afflicts us in order to take our eyes away from money and pleasure and position, and cause us to look straight into His own blessed face.

IT IS THE FATHER WHO CHASTENS

It should be understood that the chastening about which we are speaking is the experience only of children of God, of those who are children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father superintends every trial. He is tenderness personified. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord." There is comfort, too, in

the thought that the Lord Jesus Christ trod the road of sorrow and pain. God was not punishing Him when He allowed Him to be tempted "in all points like as we are, sin apart." He entered into every form of human trial and pain, not for His own sake, but because "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." He knows every feeling of the human heart. You may think that nobody understands you, that nobody appreciates the weight of the burden you bear. Jesus knows!

The nature of divine chastening is described in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, from which the text is taken. Two fathers are contrasted, the earthly father, who punishes his sons and daughters for his own pleasure, and the heavenly Father, who disciplines His children for their profit, in order that they may be made partakers of His holiness. In other words, when one becomes a Christian he enters the school of Christ to be educated. Then all the providential dealings of God are but parts of His eternal programme. He corrects, He instructs, He reproves, He rebukes, He disciplines—and back of it all is His own high and holy purpose. We are not a bit of driftwood on a swollen stream, or a fleck of dust swirling down the public highway. We are a part of a great plan, and in the development of that plan God

chastens us for our profit. The results are seen now, and they will extend to eternity. Surely yonder there will be ministries in which the faculties that God is now so painstakingly correcting, developing and training will have higher and holier manifestations than are possible here and now. When a beloved brother in the ministry went to be with the Lord some one said to me, "It seems too bad that when one is so rich in wisdom and experience, his life should be ended."

"Do you think it is ended, brother?" I asked. "No, it is just begun."

We may go to sleep tonight and awaken tomorrow to ministries, privileges and opportunities as yet unknown. "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face." For that glorious moment we are now being prepared in the crucible of affliction.

EXPERIENCE REVISES OPINIONS OF SUFFERING

Peter, near the close of his ministry, emphasized the spiritual value of suffering. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." As a young man, Peter could not have made such a statement, for he did not always have this view of suffering. It was born of experience. Early in his

Christian life he made his great confession concerning the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. "From that time forth began Jesus to show his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." His affection for His Lord made him blind to the ministry of suffering and eager only to spare Him pain. He could not understand why a good man should be afflicted. Near the close of his life, however, Peter thought it strange that any Christian should escape suffering. He himself endured much. After the day of Pentecost Peter and John faced the same council before which Jesus had stood. And "when they had beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." They had learned that though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

THE "AFTERWARD"

Affliction may yield a glorious afterward. This was the case with George Matheson, a brilliant stu-

dent who was stricken with blindness on the eve of his graduation from university. Added to this grief was another: The young woman to whom he was betrothed refused to marry him because of his affliction. As he thought of her love that had meant so much to him, now gone out of his life forever, he realized that there was a greater love that never fails, that never dies. He sang:

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

"O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's glow its day
May brighter, fairer be."

Who can estimate how many thousands of people have been inspired and comforted through George Matheson's hymn?

Dr. Moon, of Brighton, at the threshold of his life work, was also smitten with blindness. The blow was a crushing one, but submitting to the will of the heavenly Father, he turned his face heavenward and said, " O God, I accept this blindness as a talent from Thee." In the use of that talent Dr. Moon spent the remainder of his life preparing a system of raised letters for the blind by

means of which thousands have been led into the light of the Gospel.

Our present attitude toward sorrow and suffering affects the "afterward." Murmuring and complaining spell defeat. In the case of Job, Satan would have triumphed if the sufferer had said, "God is unkind; He has no right to treat me like this." But because the servant of Jehovah said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," there was a jubilee in heaven.

Resistance to the will of God which permits affliction will bring present distress and future loss. If, in the midst of trouble, we submissively seek to learn God's lessons, and in absolute abandon say,

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,"

God will give a gracious "afterward," not only in this life, but in the ages to come. Such resignation will cause the heart to believe and rest in the fact that it is in love that God chastens and scourges His sons.

VIII

WHY MEN REJECT GOD

"Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus . . . will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?"—JOHN 6:66-68.

IT is an accepted fact that all who hear the Gospel and are convinced of the truth do not accept Jesus Christ and follow Him. It is often said that

> *"If all the world my Saviour knew,*
> *Then all the world would love Him, too."*

While that is a pretty couplet, it does not accurately express the truth. During the whole Christian era men have had opportunity to know Him, but their rejection of Him has been perpetual. Isaiah the prophet, speaking of the Messiah, used the present tense: " He is despised and rejected of men." He did not say that he *would be* despised by a company of Jews living in the days of His flesh, or that He was rejected by any certain group or nation, but he implies that the rejection is continual. Many are brought face to face with the claims of Christ and the deepest needs of their own hearts; the Holy Spirit convicts them of sin

and points the way to the Saviour; yet they deliberately reject the Lord Jesus Christ and refuse His salvation.

THREE NEGATIVE REASONS

Why do men reject God? Three reasons on the negative side may be suggested.

First of all, it is not because of any flaw in His character. He was the only sinless man the world has ever known. From the beginning of His earthly life to the end of it, Satan kept his microscope upon Him in the hope of detecting some wrong. Christ's enemies also, the leaders of that day, were ever on the alert, seeking for an evidence of sin in Him. Holy and undefiled, the Lord Jesus Christ challenged the world to find any fault in Him. It was not a coincidence, but in the divine plan, that the representative of the world powers in that day should be His judge and, after examining Him, should answer that challenge and speak for all humanity, His friends and His foes alike, declaring, "I find no fault in Him." In every age, honest men have been obliged to acknowledge the spotlessness of His character.

In the second place, there is nothing forbidding or unapproachable in His nature. I talked with a lady one day about a mutual acquaintance, a preacher of the Gospel, and she said, "Oh, I do not like that man. He is so harsh." Probably she was judging him by the tone of his voice rather

than by the message that he preached. That kind of charge could never be brought against the Lord Jesus. No one ever rejected Him because of harsh treatment. He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." One cannot bear the sorrow of another unless he is deeply sympathetic. No other man in history was so moved by the sickness, the sadness and the sin of humanity as was Jesus Christ. When He saw the multitude "he was moved with compassion." When He beheld the city He wept over it. How different was His viewpoint from ours! When we look at the multitude we see forms and faces. When we behold the city we see avenues, parks and architecture. But Jesus sees hearts—bleeding and broken —poverty, graves and tears, and His great heart is moved with compassion. He understands every situation. He can attend a marriage and there perform a miracle just to make the wedding a brighter and a happier one, or He can go to a funeral and weep with those who mourn. He "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." His is not the sympathy of sentiment; it is born of experience.

Third, there is nothing objectionable in His ministry. On one occasion when the people were about to stone Him, Jesus said, "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" They re-

plied, " For a good work we stone thee not." They did not object to His healing of the sick, His restoration of the blind, His cleansing of the lepers, His feeding of the poor. They were ready to laud Him for these things. When He miraculously met a temporal need and fed a great multitude, the crowd would have made Him king by force. The same crowd rejected His message and nailed Him to the cross—a good example of the fickleness of public opinion.

The question remains, Why is He rejected. Three positive reasons may be given.

POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

First, men reject Christ because of His claim to deity. This was the chief objection of the people of His day. In unmistakable language He proclaimed Himself their Messiah sent from heaven. " I am the living bread which came down from heaven," He declared. " If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

We sometimes complain about preachers who are dogmatic on the subject of the deity of the Lord Jesus and the necessity of receiving Him as " God manifest in the flesh." The Master Himself was dogmatic. He said, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." No unbiased student can read these Scriptures without seeing that Jesus proclaimed His own deity. Had the people misunderstood His statements and received a wrong conception, He would have corrected them. On the contrary, He confirmed their convictions. It is Christ's claim to deity that people resent today. They speak approvingly of His character and good works, but they reject His teaching. If they admit that He is "God manifest in the flesh," they must also accept the truth regarding His virgin birth, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, for acceptance of the one demands acceptance of the others.

Second, men reject Christ because of fear of other men's opinions. It was for fear of the Jews that Pilate gave Jesus over to be crucified. There are many today who are convinced of the truth and who would like to become Christians, but they have not the courage to face the unbelieving and cynical world. "The fear of man," says Solomon, "bringeth a snare." For years I was under the impression that it was a very easy matter to accept

Christ and that, therefore, only women and effeminate men professed to be Christians. But when I was faced with the claims of Christ, I found that it was a man's job to decide whether to accept or reject Him. I never knew how nearly a coward I was until that moment when I felt I should stand up and publicly confess faith in Jesus Christ. If you doubt that this is a real test, I invite you to submit to it.

Third, some men reject Christ because of their love of sinful pleasures. The Christian life is a warfare, with battles daily to be fought and won. But it is also a life of indescribable joy and peace. In His presence there is fulness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. In contrast with this deep, soul satisfaction there are pleasures that are "earthly, sensual, devilish." To participate in these, thousands are willing to sell their souls. It takes courage to renounce them and, like Moses, to choose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

The story is told of a young man who was threatened with blindness. He visited a famous oculist who, after examining his eyes, said searchingly, "Young man, you are indulging in a bad habit."

"Yes," said the patient, "I know it."

The doctor told him that he must give up that practice at once or lose his eyesight forever. After the diagnosis the young man walked to the window

and stood for some time looking out. Finally he said slowly, determinedly, " Farewell, green earth. Farewell, blue skies. Farewell to the faces of my friends."

In six months he was totally blind! He had made a deliberate choice between blindness and sinful pleasure. There are many today who, spiritually, are doing the very same thing. They sell their birthright for a " morsel of meat," for " a Babylonish garment," for " a wedge of gold." Like the prodigal, they think " the far country " is a land of everlasting feasting and song, but arriving there they find out, as all their predecessors have learned, that following the feast is a long and terrible famine.

Many have the mistaken idea that consecration to Christ means the giving up of all that is joyful and bright. This is a delusion of Satan. " The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Life lived in the will of God is never monotonous. " The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." In spite of all this, thousands turn from the Source of all joy and comfort, and chase bubbles that burst, leaving them disappointed and desolate.

"O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace and joy my soul hath craved,
The bliss till now unknown."

Fourth, men reject Christ because of the enmity of the natural heart. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," said the Master.

A young man, in conversation with a Christian woman who had just attended a missionary meeting, asked, "Why are you so interested in sinners beyond the seas? Why not come to our club and save the young fellows there?"

"I would do anything in the world to bring the young men of your club to a knowledge of Christ," she said. "Will you give me the privilege of addressing them on this subject? Will you promise me that you will talk it over with them and arrange a night when I may meet them?"

He agreed to do so. A day or two later, the Christian woman met the young man and asked him what the result had been of the conversation he had promised to hold with the club members.

"Oh," he replied, "they all decided *that they did not want to be saved.*"

Is not this the reason why many turn from Christ? They know He is standing at the door. They have heard Him knocking. They have heard His voice. But they choose not to open their heart's door to Him. In the last analysis, our attitude toward Jesus Christ is a question of the will. If we do not want Him in our hearts and in our homes, He will not force an entrance. He waits to be invited to come in. He is now saying to some, as He did to Zacchæus, "Make haste, and come

down, for today I must abide at thy house." Unlike Zacchæus, many spurn His love and His mercy. Oh, the sadness of it! "He is despised and rejected of men."

There are some, thank God, who do not reject Him. When Jesus saw that "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him," He asked the twelve the pathetic question: "Will ye also go away?" Peter spoke for the twelve and for multitudes since that day when he replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

When I think of the men and women who are putting forth such concerted efforts to shatter the faith of humanity in the great truths of the Gospel, I wonder if they ever stop to honestly consider what the outcome would be if their efforts were successful. If they turn sinners away from Christ, to whom shall they go? Who else can solve the problem of sin and satisfy the longing of the human heart?

"Those who trust Him wholly,
Find Him wholly true."

IX

THE MAN OF SORROWS

"He is despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."—ISAIAH 53:3.

THE title in which Christ delighted more than all others was "the Son of man." It occurs eighty times in the Gospels and is applied only by Jesus to Himself. It is a glorious name, full of hope for the human family. Had He been merely the son of Abraham, He would have been limited to one race. If He were only the son of David He would be confined to one family. But as "the Son of man" Jesus Christ became the second Adam, sustaining a relation to all men everywhere. The title implies that every man may find a response to his need in Him, for He is the man of men, the glory of the whole human race.

It is said that one day Henry George, the great humanitarian and economist, returned to his home after an extensive tour of public speaking. A crowd of admirers awaited him and hailed him as "the friend of the working man." To this salutation he replied, "No! I am not the friend of the working man; I am the friend of man." Like the Master, he included in his sympathies the whole human family.

Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and in that sense, unlike any other man born of woman. But while He was here on earth, He refused to be forced into a position of superiority over any one class. He responded without distinction to the needs and appeals of all classes, rich and poor, high and low. He was no respecter of persons.

HE WAS SINLESS

The Lord Jesus was the only sinless man the world has ever known. He Himself said, "Which of you convicteth me of sin? The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." To this challenge that He flung out to both Satan and the world, and which has come ringing down the corridors of time, no answer has been returned, and none ever will be. On the other hand, the experience of every honest heart, and especially of every Christian, is expressed in the words of Scripture: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray." "There is none righteous, no, not one." Christ alone is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

While He is sinless, He was *not sorrowless*. Indeed, He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Some one has said, "God had one Son without sin, but not one without sorrow." Those who doubt that we live in a fallen world find it difficult to account for this universal wail of mankind. Like the scroll of Ezekiel, human history is a book "written within and without"

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with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." There is nothing more common or constant than sorrow and suffering. George MacDonald expresses this thought in his well-known poem on "Baby" in which he asks a question and receives an answer from the newly born child.

"Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here."

From the cradle to the grave, sorrow is the portion of every man. Over the face of youth the tears fall fast; they furrow the cheeks of maturity; while to old age they come as the saltiest tears of all. "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Next to a Saviour, humanity needs most of all a Comforter. Christ is both. He has come not only to save us from our sins, but to bear our burdens, and to dry our tears. Sorrow fills a large part of the life of each of us. But in comparison with the torrents of grief that swept the whole earthly life of our Lord, our woes are but tiny bubbles that rise and burst on the stream of our daily existence.

The elegy of suffering from which our text is taken begins in the thirteenth verse of Isaiah fifty-two and includes the whole fifty-third chapter. It is obvious that this prophecy refers to Christ, although some critics deny this. Some have thought it was Isaiah himself who was referred to. Such a theory would necessitate some radical changes in the eighth chapter of the Book of the Acts. There

we read the interesting story of the conversion of a royal sinner. A certain Ethiopian was returning from Jerusalem to his own country and was evidently much concerned about his soul. He had secured somewhere a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah, and as he crossed the desert, seated in his chariot, he was reading this part of the Scriptures in his quest for God. Philip, an evangelist, drew near to the chariot and inquired if he understood what he read. The eunuch replied, "How can I, except some one should guide me?" Then Philip sat down by his side, and beginning at these very same Scriptures he preached unto him Jesus. How could he, from this portion, preach any one but Christ? Who else was led as a Lamb to the slaughter with the iniquity of us all laid upon Him? So, if we delete the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah because it does not refer to Christ, we must do away with the eighth chapter of the Acts. We must find another who is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," on whose brow the crown of thorns will fit. There is no being who can justly lay claim to this likeness other than Jesus, God's only begotten Son. In Him sorrow was multiplied and grief was His familiar friend.

Let us look at some of the kinds of suffering that He bore and seek a reason for His bearing it.

HE BORE THE SORROW OF LONELINESS

There are three kinds of loneliness. First of all,

there is *the loneliness of solitude*. Solitude is not always a hardship. It may, and often does, prove a great blessing. I am sure Christ found it so. Often after a busy day, He withdrew Himself to the mountains to spend the night alone, or He went out into a desert place a great while before day in order that He might commune with His heavenly Father. Such loneliness is a privilege to be frequently sought.

There is a second kind of loneliness that is hard to bear. It is *the loneliness of character* which makes a man feel himself isolated although in the midst of other men. Our Saviour knew such loneliness. He was so different from those about Him, in His desires and purposes, in His hopes, yearnings and aspirations, that He was forever a stranger in this world. No one understood Him. Even His mother failed to comprehend the meaning of His mission. When He was twelve years old she "found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Then it is added, "They understood not the saying which he spake unto them." His disciples were unable to fully appreciate His teaching or to understand the meaning of His sacrifice. It is evident from the final message that He gave to them

before He went to the Cross, that He would have made known to them many things concerning the mysteries of the spiritual life, if they had been able to comprehend. " I have yet many things to say unto you," He told them, " but ye cannot bear them now."

In the third place, there is *the loneliness of shame.* The Book of Job furnishes a vivid picture of this kind of suffering. Through no fault of his own, Job suffered reverses, losses and afflictions. Dispossessed of everything, he was deserted by family and friends. They passed him with averted look and cruel judgment. Even his wife wished that he were dead. So terrible was his suffering that poor Job cried out: " My soul is weary of my life."

There is no loneliness so painful as the loneliness of shame. It may be the result of any one of a number of causes. It may come, as it did to the patriarch, through no wrong-doing of the sufferer. Or, it may come as the result of the sin of another. An illustration of this is found in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables.* It was the shame of suffering for another that Jean Valjean found hard to endure. Even little children looked upon him with distrustful eyes. As one reads of his experiences, one feels that out of Hades itself there can come no more poignant anguish than the suffering of shame. Have you never looked into the face of a father or a mother who is bearing the disgrace of a wayward son or daughter? Have you not observed how

quickly the hair has grown grey, how deep have become the furrows that wrinkle the brow, and how faded the smile? The cutting salutation of a neighbour or the haughty glance of a former friend falls upon them like a scourge; yet they suffer on in silence.

No man ever endured such shame as did our blessed Lord. In that terrible night of anguish when God laid on Him "the iniquity of us all," not only His foes but His friends turned from Him. "They all forsook him and fled."

"Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place, condemned, He stood."

HE BORE THE SORROW OF UNREQUITED LOVE

Another kind of sorrow, that of unrequited love, is described by the Apostle John, whose affectionate disposition made him especially qualified to write on such a theme. Speaking of Christ, he says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." There is perhaps no sadder picture in the whole New Testament than that contained in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. There Jesus stands, looking over the Holy City, and cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Referring to the same incident, Luke says: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." There He had fed the poor, healed the

D. L. Moody used to tell a story of a mechanic in Wisconsin who, during the Civil War, was drafted into the army. He was poor, with no reserve funds to provide for his large family and invalid wife. But he had a friend, a young man, unmarried, who came forward and volunteered to take his place in the service; in fact, he insisted on doing so. In the Battle of Gettysburg, that young man was mortally wounded. When news of his death reached his home city, no one was more deeply grieved than the poor mechanic. What could he do to show his gratitude? He decided to make a head-board of hard wood, and when it was finished he took it to Gettysburg and placed it at the head of that lonely grave. It bore the name of the young man who had been killed, and underneath were just four words: "He died for me." That is substitution. The young man went to war in another's place; he fought the battle for him; he received the fatal wound and died in his stead; and all that the mechanic could do was to declare, "He died for me." "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

The death of that Wisconsin boy exemplifies the substitution of a friend for a friend. There is something greater still. As an abiding example of amazing grace and love, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He took our place; He died in our stead. When once that stupendous truth dawns upon one, the most natural thing to

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do is to acknowledge His love, accept His sacrifice, and, taking a stand before the Cross of Christ, confess to the world—

"It was for me the Saviour died,
On Calvary."

HE SHALL BE SATISFIED

What recompense shall the Lord of glory receive for the sorrow He has borne? In Isaiah 53:10, 11 we are told how we may requite and compensate Him, at least in some measure. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days. . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." In other words, when you accept the offering that God has made for sin, the gift of His Son, "he shall be satisfied." When you receive as your Saviour the One who bore the agony of the Cross for you, He shall be glad that He died in your place. He Himself has told us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. To know the joy of saving the lost, He "endured the cross, despising the shame."

Over forty years ago I received my first soul vision of Calvary. Without a thought of God in my heart, I passed a street meeting where a little woman was standing on a box, singing. She had a wonderful voice, and in her heart there had been shed abroad the love of God. Oh, how sweetly she sang!

"When I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

"See! from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

There was a refrain:

"O Calvary, dark Calvary,
Speak to some heart from Calvary."

God answered the prayer of that hymn, and spoke to me then and there. Like John Newton,

"My conscience felt and owned its guilt
And plunged me in despair—
I saw my sins His blood had spilt
And helped to nail Him there."

That was the greatest moment of my life. I have had thousands of blessings since. My heart is full of assurance and gladness now, and I know that I shall be with Christ throughout eternity. But the beginning of it all was the vision of the Cross and the realization that Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, died for me.

X

TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."—PSALM 40:1-3.

WITHIN the compass of these three brief verses such great subjects as sin, salvation, security, song, and service are treated.

SIN

Sin heads the list. Under the figure of a horrible pit filled with miry clay, into which the unwary traveller sinks to his doom, the subtle working of sin and Satan are seen. Sin is a treacherous bog. Its dangers are not apparent to the light-hearted men and women who argue that they can do certain things that they know to be wrong, without being harmed by them. They refuse to be warned by those who have gone before them, for "this their way is their folly and their posterity approve of their doings." There are hundreds of persons in every great city, captives of sin, across whose faces is written "hopelessness." Had any one told them

a few years ago that they would become slaves to the habits and passions that now degrade them, they would have laughed scornfully at the suggestion of such an impossibility, and replied, "Do you think I am a fool that I should do such a thing?" They began, as many young people are beginning today, to indulge in pleasures that seemed simple and pleasant. But sin soon exerted over them a strange and terrible power, and although they loathed their condition, they were unable to set themselves free. Now they are "holden by the cords of their own sins." They are prisoners in "an horrible pit," and with every human effort to liberate themselves they sink deeper into the mire.

I can think of nothing more terrible than a place of eternal sin. Hell, as the Bible describes it, will be such a place. People sometimes ask, "Do you think the 'fire' referred to will be literal fire?" The Bible would warrant one in believing that it will be. If, on the other hand, it is a figure used by Jesus Christ to impress upon us the awfulness of the punishment that awaits those who reject the Saviour, the reality cannot be less terrible than the symbol. If a sinner is compelled to spend eternity with an uncleansed heart, that will be hell enough.

Through the years, when I have seen men and women sinking into sin's horrible pit, I have tried to warn them of their danger and point them to

safety as it is in Christ. Not every one has heeded. I recall a young woman whom I met a number of years ago in a Canadian city. She had a beautiful face; she was well educated; but she was worldly and godless. When I broached the subject of her salvation, she was most flippant. I learned something about her that greatly shocked me. She smoked; and in those days, a girl who smoked was at once an oddity and a disgrace. Over a period of several years I saw her occasionally and was amazed and saddened at her rapid moral decline. Probably fifteen years from the day I first met her I saw her again in a large city. Her features were pinched and haggard. Her skirts were covered with mud. She was chewing tobacco and was terribly intoxicated. A brother minister, who had been one of this woman's classmates, had seen her leaning against a post for support. He brought her to my door, asking me to look after her until he could make provision for her. In the course of the conversation I had with her that day, I shall never forget the pathos with which she said repeatedly, "Oh, Mr. Philpott, the way of the transgressor is hard!" She wished then that she had taken my advice of fifteen years before and had given herself to Jesus Christ. If she had done so, she would have been spared shame and sadness, and no one can estimate the good she might have done.

No one need reach this extremity. There is free-

dom through faith in One Who is "mighty to save." A certain Chicago salesman, addicted to the drink habit, exercised such faith and was liberated. One morning in the train on which he was travelling with several associates, a flask of liquor was passed around. When it came to him, he said, "No, I am not taking any this morning."

At first the men laughed at his refusal; but when they saw that he was not joking, they asked, "Are you ill?"

"No," he replied, "but something happened last week in Chicago that changed my mind."

"What was it?" they asked.

He told this story: "My business took me down on South Clark Street and into a pawn shop. While I was there a young man came in, poorly clad and shivering with the cold. He had a little parcel which he handed to the pawnbroker with the implied question, 'Give me ten cents for this?' The owner of the shop opened the package and found a tiny pair of baby shoes that had never been worn. 'Why, man,' he said, 'you are not going to sell your baby's boots, are you?' 'Oh, give me ten cents for them, and give it to me quick!' he cried. 'No,' replied the pawnbroker. 'Take them back. Your baby will need them.' 'She'll never need them,' he declared. 'She died last night.' When I saw that poor, shivering fellow, and realized the hopelessness of his life and the sadness of his home, I saw myself five or ten years from now, and

I prayed, ' O my God, help me, and save me from this curse for Jesus' sake.' "

SALVATION

Salvation is sin's antidote. Or, to use the Psalmist's figure, it is a deliverance from " an horrible pit." A Chinaman who experienced this deliverance and was instrumental in turning many of his countrymen to Christ, was visited by missionaries and asked to relate the circumstances of his salvation. Although he had never had an opportunity to read the fortieth Psalm, he replied in the spirit and almost in the words of David when he said: " This poor Chinaman was in a deep, dark well. I cried for Confucius to help me. He came and looked at me and said, ' Poor Chinaman! It is too bad you are down so far. If you could only get out I could help you, and I could keep you from getting in again.' But I could not get out. He could not reach me, and so he had no help for me. Then I cried for Buddha. He came and wept over me and said, ' I am sure I could help you if you could only get out.' He, too, was unable to reach me. Finally I heard some missionaries talking about one Jesus who *comes right down where men are,* and lifts them out of the horrible pit. I cried to Him and He came to the place where I was, and lifted me."

The Lord Jesus is able to do this not only because he comes to the place where we are, but

because He went, as our substitute, to the place where we should have gone. " He bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

The truth of substitution has been beautifully set forth by Dr. C. I. Scofield. He pictured three men in a Roman prison. A guard entered and, approaching one of the prisoners, he said, " Barabbas, I am going to unlock these chains and set you free."

" Don't mock me," replied the prisoner.

" I am not mocking you; another man is to die in your place. Pilate asked the people whom they would release: Jesus, who is called Christ, or Barabbas, the criminal. The vote was unanimous for you."

Dr. Scofield drew upon imagination and pictured Barabbas, a free man, mingling with the crowd on the way to Golgotha. His two companions carried their crosses and Jesus bent low under the weight of the cross that should have been Barabbas'. Finally the Lord Jesus staggered and fell, and the cross was carried by another. When at last the Lord Jesus was lifted upon that cruel tree, Dr. Scofield believed that Barabbas looked upon Him as his substitute and trusted Him as His Saviour. Whether or not this was the criminal's actual experience, it is the way of salvation for every man. No one can free himself from the " horrible pit," and no human arm is long enough to effect the deliverance of another. But there is

One "whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save." Faith in Him will issue in the testimony:

"From sinking sand, He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light,
Oh, praise His name, He lifted me!"

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." What other message can one give to a poor sinner who has wasted his substance in riotous living and is facing eternity without a Saviour? I am so glad I believe in a Gospel that helps people who cannot do anything for themselves. For example, here is a man hanging on a cross: He cannot go to an altar or to a communion table. He cannot join the Church. But he wants to be saved. He cries out in the dark, "O Lord, when thou comest into thy kingdom, remember me." As quickly as the petition is uttered, Christ turns to him with the assuring reply: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

SECURITY

"He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

Men and women frequently refuse to yield to Christ because they fear they will make shipwreck of their faith. They dread a "falling away" and a return to sin. They do not realize that the keeping power of Christ is as great as His saving power.

Paul declares: "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." According to Peter, we are "kept by the power of God." It is not a question of your holding on. Jesus Christ lifts you from the horrible pit, sets your feet upon a rock, and establishes your goings; and He undertakes Himself to hold you fast.

"When I fear my faith will fail,
He will hold me fast;
When the tempter would prevail,
He will hold me fast."

When we realize our security in Christ, there is progress in the Christian life. Many years ago I heard the testimony of a poor, simple-minded brother which illustrates this truth. He said: "I was down in a horrible mud-hole. The Lord lifted me up and put my feet on the rock, and He established me—going!"

This man had a true philosophy of salvation. He was not glued or chained to the rock, but had a glorious liberty as well as security upon the rock, because he was led and kept by the power of God.

SONG

"He hath put a new song in my mouth."

Christianity, because it offers salvation from sin, and security in Christ, is a religion of song. In this it is unlike every other great religion of the world. To the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ

is given joy, "more than they that watch for the morning." When the light of His countenance falls upon them, its radiance illumines their lives and their souls are filled with a glad and holy triumph. "He sets the joy bells ringing in the heart." The songs of praise and testimonies of believers must sound extravagant to those who have not been redeemed. They speak not only of a changed heart, since Christ is enthroned there, but of a new outlook upon life.

"Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.

"Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauty shine,
Since I know as now I know,
I am His and He is mine."

SERVICE

"Many shall see it, and fear, and trust."

When a poor, hopeless, worthless sinner is established on the rock of ages, he ceases to be a liability and becomes an asset to society. He is saved to serve. I once met a remarkable group of such transformed men. They were superintendents of city rescue missions, gathered in conference. Some of them had been notorious leaders in crime. Their pictures had decorated rogues' galleries. But they had been saved by the grace of God and kept by

His power. So great was the change that salvation had wrought in them that they might have been mistaken for a group of bank presidents and influential business men. They were a powerful illustration of the fact that men who believe the Gospel, preach it, and live it, are making a tremendous contribution to the welfare of society.

The question arises, How may the blessings of salvation be realized? There are thousands of persons in the miry clay of sin who never get out. David was rescued because he *wanted* to be free, and he cried to God for help. He says of Jehovah, "He inclined (or bent over) unto me and heard my cry." He will do the same for any poor, struggling sinner who calls to Him for mercy. He is listening still, and even a faint cry for help will bring Him quickly to the suppliant's aid. Regardless of reputation or environment, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." A striking illustration of this verse occurred a few years ago when five men were entombed in a Kentucky mine. Only one of the five was a Christian. But during the dark days of their imprisonment, while parties of rescuers worked feverishly, this one saved man led three of his companions to Christ. One would not yield. Days passed, and all hope of liberation vanished. Then the leader of the group faced the unsaved member and said, "Fred, I am going to write a message for the

friends to read when they find us. What shall I say about you?" There was a pause, a struggle, and finally a clear reply: "Write me down saved!"

There in the depths of the earth, with no mother, no preacher, no friend to point the way, five helpless men called on the name of the Lord and through grace received the glorious consciousness that He met and saved them.

"For the love of God is greater
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

XI

A CHOSEN VESSEL

"He is a chosen vessel unto me."—Acts 9:15.

MEASURED by consequences, next to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the greatest event of all history. When we read the story of his character and ministry we feel ashamed of our own Christian service. His sublime faith, his great courage, his consuming passion for the souls of the lost, his willingness to be anything or nothing in the eyes of men, his joy in suffering for Christ's sake, place him in a category by himself.

In speaking of his conversion, I would have you think of the results that followed, rather than the signs that accompanied it, such as the light which was brighter than the noonday sun or the voice from heaven heard only by Saul. These things were thrilling, and it is natural to desire to enlarge upon them, but they are not the important features of that great event. The change in the man himself and the results of that change extending to all subsequent generations are the things that warrant the statement that his conversion to Christianity is the greatest event in history since the resurrection

of Jesus Christ. The transformation was instantaneous and complete. One moment he was breathing out threatening and slaughter; the next, he was prone on his face crying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From that hour, his whole life throbbed with a passion like that of his Lord. It swayed his purpose, it commanded his action, it dominated his sacrifice. He counted not his life dear unto himself that he might prove faithful in his ministry. He made himself, by a remarkable adjustment, "all things to all men" that he might win some. He warned men night and day. In a ministry not only in the Church but from house to house, he was ever enduring hardship, suffering persecution and privation, yet always sounding this lofty note of triumph: "This one thing I do."

This man of gigantic intellect and ripest culture found no employment for his imperial ability so congenial as the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. And it should not be forgotten that his, the greatest of all ministries of the Christian centuries, including as it did both the preaching of the Gospel and the writing of the inspired Epistles, resulted in the conversion of hundreds of thousands to Jesus Christ. It was a great day for Asia, for Europe, indeed for all men during the whole Christian era, when Saul of Tarsus fell at the feet of Jesus Christ and said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And it was a great day for Saul himself, for the world would never have heard of

him if he had not thus surrendered himself to the Lord.

A TWOFOLD DISCOVERY

First of all, Saul learned that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had hated and persecuted, was none other than "the holy one of Israel," the Messiah for whom the Hebrew people had been waiting, and that day he accepted Him as his personal Saviour.

All Christian experience begins with a definite, personal relation to Jesus Christ. Some time ago a minister who might be classed as a "liberal," said to me that one of his main objections to the brethren who insist upon the authority of the whole Bible is that they make a "man's salvation depend upon the acceptance of certain dogma." The statement greatly surprised me. "I do not know of any minister of the Gospel," I told him, "who would make a soul's salvation depend upon the acceptance of religious dogma. We believe that the salvation of the sinner depends upon his relation to Jesus Christ. 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And there is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.'"

Secondly, Saul discovered that God had a plan

for his life. He did not know it before, and he never would have found it out had he not yielded himself to the control of the Spirit of the living God. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was his cry. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Cecil Rhodes, of South African fame, once said: "If there is a God and He cares for men, then the most important thing for me is to find out what He wants me to do, and go and do it." Surely there can be no more important thing for any one of us to do than to find out what the plan of God is for our lives. Some of us have lived long enough to know that His will is not only the holiest and safest thing for us, but it is the happiest. The power of God, the love of God, the grace of God, the wisdom of God, are all back of the man who lives his life in the will of God.

A REVISED OPINION

As we study the story of the conversion of Saul we learn another very important lesson. He was not chosen because of his talents or brilliant gifts. We are very apt to magnify the man rather than the grace of God. After his conversion, Paul never thought of glorying in his native or acquired ability. He said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." But before he had a soul vision of Jesus Christ, he thought very highly of himself—"a Hebrew of the Hebrews," "a Pharisee of the Phari-

sees," and as touching the law, "blameless." He revised his opinion of himself when he saw his Lord. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may . . . be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." He now feels it an honour to be able to say, "I am the chief of sinners" and "less than the least of all saints." When we come face to face with our Lord, we are cured of self-righteousness. A vision of Him kills human pride and conceit.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he makes known the secret of God's choice of His servants. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

When God would do a great work, He looks for

a servant who is small enough in his own estimation to allow God to use him. Moses, the great lawgiver and leader of Israel, was the logical man to lead the people from the land of bondage to Canaan. We are told that he was trained in all the wisdom and ways of the Egyptians. He was probably the commander-in-chief of all Pharaoh's armies and, next to the king himself, the greatest man in the land. But how dismally he failed in his first attempt to free his people! The fact is that Moses was then too strong for God. He had too much faith in his own right arm.

"The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own."

During forty years of exile, Moses became as meek as the sheep that he shepherded. Then one day, with his shoes removed from his feet and his face covered, he drew near to God and heard His voice saying unto him, " I am the God of thy father. I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? " The Lord said practically this: " I have

waited all these years for you to get this opinion of yourself. Now you are usable. Certainly I will be with thee."

Is some one asking, How may I know the plan of God for my life? There is just one way to find it out, the way that Saul took—by an absolute surrender to Christ, to go AS He leads, to go WHERE He leads, and to go WHEN He leads. It might be summed up in the words of the apostle, " I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

HOW GOD USED ONE YIELDED LIFE

A few years ago, a man whom God blessed as few men have been blessed since the days of the apostles, went home to his reward. When D. L. Moody died, one of the leading daily papers of the city in which he lived came out in glaring headlines with the statement, " Chicago's Most Notable Citizen Has Passed Away." Professor Henry Drummond said of him in *McClure's Magazine:* "America possesses no greater personality. No American has rendered greater service to his country than has this man." Dr. John R. Mott, in an article in the *American Magazine* on " The Seven Greatest Men That I Have Known," gave Moody first place. Dr. Robert E. Speer spoke of him as a combination

of General Grant, John B. Gough, Abraham Lincoln, Charles H. Spurgeon, and a few others; but he said that he was none of them—" He was just his great self, a torrent of love and power set to sweep men to God."

When you seek for the secret of Moody's marvellous life and ministry, you find it is the same as that of Saul of Tarsus—he was absolutely surrendered to the will of his God. On one occasion a great evangelist said, " The world has yet to see what God can do through a man wholly yielded to His will." And Moody said in his heart, " Lord, I would be that man! "

Moody became a great evangelist, leading many thousands to Jesus Christ, and one might say moving whole continents toward the cross. He became also an outstanding educator, the founder of the first Bible Institute, located at Chicago, through which have passed many thousands of students. Hundreds of them have found places of service for Christ in the regions beyond, ministering to the heathen, while other hundreds have become Christian workers in America and Canada. Mr. Moody also founded schools for young men and women at Northfield, Massachusetts. Through all of these his ministry is today being extended through the multitudes that he inspired by his consecration and example.

Surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not promise that He will make of you a Paul

or a Spurgeon or a Moody, although He may. But when your all is yielded to Him, He will surely use you up to the limit of His grace and power. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." May He say of you, as of Saul of Tarsus, "He is a chosen vessel unto me."

XII

CHRIST'S BROTHERHOOD

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."—HEBREWS 2:11.

IN these days we hear a great deal about fraternities, fellowships and brotherhoods. I want to talk to you about the brotherhood of Christ, one that is really worth while.

You have doubtless observed, in reading the New Testament, that the Christian life is presented from numerous viewpoints. Sometimes it is a life of faith. It begins by believing on Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour. "We walk by faith." "Without faith it is impossible to please him." Again, it is a life of service; ministering to others in the name and spirit of Him who went about doing good. It is also a life of holiness. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Jesus is made unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

Again, it is a life of hope—"that blessed hope." Paul calls it in his Epistle to Titus, "the glorious

appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." But above all, the Christian life is a life of love, a life of intimacy and fellowship with our risen Lord.

A VITAL UNION

One of the great and glorious truths of divine revelation is the fact of the vital, eternal union that subsists between Christ and His Church. This truth is so important and so precious that the Holy Spirit has taken the most exquisite figure of human affection to describe the bond that binds His heart to the hearts of those whom He calls His own. It is not the love of a comrade, or the love of a brother, or even the more sacred love of a mother. But it is that love that links two hearts in an exclusive union into which none other dares rightfully to intrude. It is the love of the husband and the wife, of the bridegroom and the bride.

Even that beautiful figure fails to set forth this union in all of its perfection; hence, several other metaphors are used. For instance, in John's Gospel we read of the shepherd and the sheep. Christ is the shepherd and we are the sheep. In the fifteenth chapter we have the figure of the vine and the branches. He is the vine and we are the branches. In the Epistles we have the figure of a building. Christ is the foundation and we are the material that makes up the whole. Then we have the figure of the human body. He is the head and

we are the members of that body—"members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." But the most sublime metaphor is that of the husband and the wife. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of the marriage bond, says that when the twain are joined they are "one flesh, but he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." You may separate the sheep from the shepherd; you may cut away the branches from the vine; you may sever a member from the body; you may tear away the material from the corner stone and the foundation; you may divorce the wife or the husband; but there is no line of cleavage in one's spirit. Oh, what a sanctifying and satisfying truth!

I have come to think that all Christians, whether Calvinists or Arminians, are equally secure. But all Christians are not equally happy. The reason they are not is because this great truth of their unity with Christ has never gripped them. There is a tradition that comes down to us from the days of the Passover in Egypt of two Hebrew maidens who, on the night that the death angel was passing through the land, were behind the closed doors that had been sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. One was seated at the table feasting on the roasted lamb while the other was walking the floor in anguish of mind and agony of heart. The latter kept wondering if the death angel had passed. Her sister said: "It makes no difference whether he has passed or not. The blood is on the door and God

has said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.'" While both sisters were perfectly safe, they were not equally sure. It matters a great deal whether or not we believe the Word of God—it makes a difference in our happiness.

In the first chapters of this wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews the writer suggests several blessed aspects of this glorious union.

ONE IN HUMAN NATURE

In chapter one, the emphasis is upon the deity of the Lord Jesus. He is "heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." Here He is Very God of Very God. But in the second chapter, Christ is one with us in our humanity. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. He is also Very Man of Very Man. In our day there is terrible and widespread denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is just as great an error to undervalue His humanity. Yet, one religion that is very popular today boldly denies Christ's humanity and scoffs at the idea that God was manifest in the flesh. John, in his Epistle,

tells us that we are to "try the spirits whether they are of God." Here is one of the tests: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist." The only way we can account for Jesus Christ is by believing the story of His incarnation recorded in the Gospels. How can we account for Him except by believing that the Babe lying in the manger is "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"? In no other way can we explain His matchless ministry, His wonderful teaching, His marvellous miracles, His holy life. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

Christ's unity with us in our humanity is not the ultimate goal. The purpose of the incarnation was that we might partake of His divine nature. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. It is a wonderful thing to be born of God. The new birth is real and vital. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and take Him as our Saviour, we pass out of death into life and are made "partakers of the divine nature." "Christ hath redeemed us," Paul writes, "from the curse of the law" that we might receive the adoption of sonship. By His death on the cross He closed forever the gates of hell for all who would receive Him as Saviour. But that is not all. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just

for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We receive the spirit of adoption. " Because ye are sons," says Paul, " God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

On the night that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour, I went home from a public meeting and knelt down beside my bed to pray. I found myself intuitively calling God " my Father." Who taught me to do that? I had thought of God only as the Almighty. I was afraid of Him. His very name terrified me. But lo, when I received His Son, I received the spirit of sonship, too, and that Spirit cried, "Abba, Father." It is a great thing to be born of Him who says: " For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." It was a marvellous experience for me when I called Him my Saviour. But an infinitely greater truth dawned upon me when I realized that He calls me " brother." What an honour to trust Him, to follow Him, to believe that I am to be with Him throughout eternity! And not only so, but He owns me with all my weaknesses and my faults and failures, and is not ashamed to call me His brother. It seems too good to be true. But—

"It is written in God's Word,
And I believe it."

ONE IN EXPERIENCE

Furthermore, Christ is one with us in the com-

mon experiences of our everyday life. Oh, that helps one so! He was made perfect through suffering. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." He knew what it was to be hungry. He knew what it was to be slandered. He knew how it felt to be blasphemed. He knew poverty. He was rich, but for our sakes He became poor. The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay His head. He knew what it was to be weary. He knew what it meant to have people call Him a devil. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Oh, my sister, my brother, if you are passing through trouble of any kind, remember that you have, standing in the presence of God, a great High Priest making intercession for you, who can be "touched with all the feeling of our infirmities." He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

"Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He doth not bear,
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,
Moment by moment I'm under His care.

"Never a heartache and never a groan,
Never a teardrop and never a moan,
Never a danger, but there on the throne,
Moment by moment He thinks of His own.

"Never a weakness that He doth not feel,
Never a sickness that He cannot heal;
Moment by moment, in woe or in weal,
Jesus, my Saviour, abides with me still."

I am so glad He was a Man! He went down the road over which I am walking. He stepped on the thorns that pierce my feet. He met all life's trials, and it helps me so to know that He knows, and cares.

ONE IN SORROW AND DEATH

It is a very solemn fact that unless the Lord appears in glory and takes us home by translation, every one of us in just a little while—some of us in a very little while—must come to an open grave. I believe it was Mr. Moody who once said: "Looking backward over my life as far as my recollection carries me, I see graves, graves, graves—children's graves, parents' graves, graves of companions and friends. They are all filled up, covered over. Then I look in the other direction, the way which I am going, and all I can see far, far in the distance is graves, graves, graves. They are open and waiting. Mine may be down there, and yours may be down there; and when we come to them, we will stop."

It is a solemn thought. But listen. He took part of our flesh "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were

all their lifetime subject to bondage." In the hour of bereavement Jesus is one with us. At the time of Lazarus' death we read that He spoke of him as His friend. I sometimes think the world came nearer to understanding Jesus at that point than at any other. When He calmed the sea the people asked, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" When He healed the child with an unclean spirit, "they were all amazed at the mighty power of God." But when He stood beside the grave and let His tears fall they said, "Behold, how he loved him!" Oh, yes, He knows all about it. He knows the anguish of heart that comes when we stand and look for the last time on the face of our beloved dead.

During the war I had to go, from time to time, to the homes of a number of my parishioners to tell them that a son had been slain, or that a father or a husband had died in battle. In the city where I served God there were over twelve thousand men who went to the war, and from my own congregation there were eighty at the front. In the first years of the struggle nearly every week messages came, telling us that some one in our congregation had been taken. At first, messenger boys were sent with telegrams bearing the terrible news, and in delivering them they would just open the doors and push them in. But women fainted and fell, nearly dying, in their doorways, and finally

the authorities said, " We will have the preachers do it."

One morning early I had a telephone call. A husband and father had been slain in battle. I knew that home—there was a little Scotch wife in it, a good Christian woman, and four or five bairnies. All the way to her house I kept asking God to give me the right words to say to her. When she opened the door she looked suspiciously at me. " Preacher, why so early? " she said. " Is my husband dead? "

" Yes," I replied, " he is dead."

She backed down the hall into a little dining room, and the children came and gathered around her. One little girl asked, " Mamma, is daddy dead? " And then they all sobbed when the mother replied, " Yes, they've killed him."

I could not do a thing but weep with them. After a while the woman looked up and said, " Preacher, do you think God Almighty knows about all this? Does God care? "

You may think that was a strange way for a Christian to speak. But, friends, have not our hearts, too, been wrung at times with that cry of anguish on dark nights and in bitter experiences through which we have passed? As I stood there almost dumb in the presence of such grief I remembered that Jesus, our precious Saviour, passed through a night of great sorrow and that He cried out in anguish, " My God, my God, *why?* " I am

so glad that Jesus went through that experience, because I could then say to the little Scotch woman, " Yes, He knows."

"He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing His love can dim;
He does the very best for those
Who leave the choice with Him."

I have spent nearly all of my life among poor people. I have been going to deathbeds and homes of sorrow, trying to say something that would comfort wounded hearts. I think I would have committed suicide half-way back on the journey if I had not believed the Old Book. Oh, why are preachers trying to take away faith in this wonderful Gospel?

My baby boy, my eighth son, was taken to the hospital one morning. I went there to see him, and they put a white robe on me, for he was ill with diphtheria. When I went into the room the little fellow looked at me and said, " Daddy, why do you dress like that when you come here? "

I said, " Donnie, it is because the doctors and the nurses do, and they will not let me come in unless I put this robe on."

" Daddy," he asked me, " am I going to die? "

His little feet were in the cold waters even then. They were slipping over the brink. Answering, I asked him a question. " Donnie," I said, " are you afraid to die? "

Do you know what my little lamb replied? "No, daddy, I am not afraid to die! Jesus is with me."

God pity you, you school teacher, you professor, if you dare to steal that faith away from my child! "Jesus is with me." That was the testimony of my baby. He could say with David, "I fear no evil, for thou art with me." Christ Himself meets every saint as he comes to the river's brink, and He carries him safely over. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

ONE IN ETERNITY

We are to be one with Him in eternal destiny. Was it not Rowland Hill who used to say: "We two are so joined that He will not be in glory and leave me behind"?

When they stand at the altar, a man and a woman, and we pronounce them husband and wife, they say, "Until death do us part." But, thank God, there is a union that death cannot sever. There is a bond that is stronger than death. You remember how Paul speaks in the eighth chapter of Romans. He says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be

able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Oh, what a Gospel to give to a poor, troubled, weary world! I do not wonder that Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." "He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

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